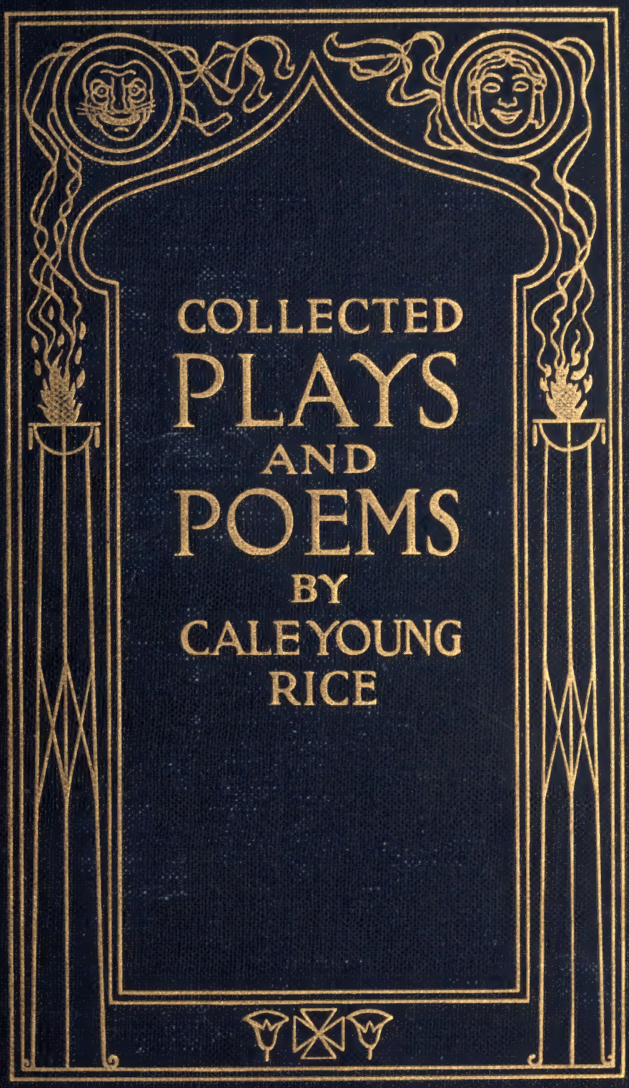
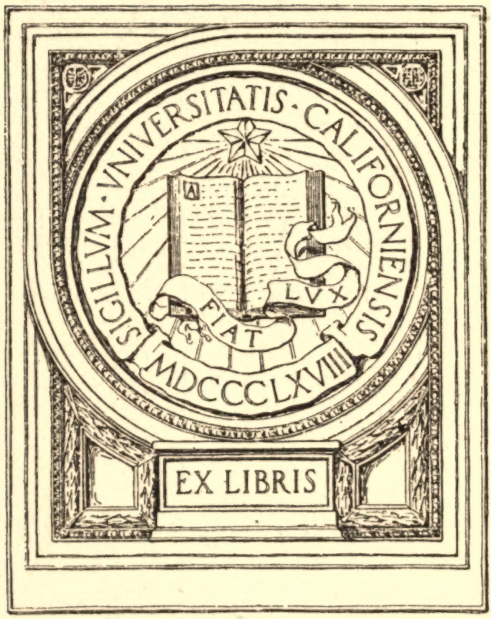

COLLECTED
PLAYS
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POEMS
BY
CALE YOUNG
RICE



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COLLECTED PLAYS AND POEMS

COLLECTED PLAYS AND POEMS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE



VOLUME TWO

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1915

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MANY GODS

First Published 1910

To
FINIS KING FARR
An Old and Dear Comrade

"ALL'S WELL"

I

The illimitable leaping of the sea,
The mouthing of his madness to the moon,
The seething of his endless sorcery,
His prophecy no power can attune,
Swept over me as, on the sounding prow
Of a great ship that steered into the stars,
I stood and felt the awe upon my brow
Of death and destiny and all that mars.

II

The wind that blew from Cassiopeia cast
Wanly upon my ear a rune that rung;
The sailor in his eyrie on the mast
Sang an "All's well," that to the spirit clung

Like a lost voice from some aërial realm
Where ships sail on forever to no shore,
Where Time gives Immortality the helm,
And fades like a far phantom from life's door.

III

"And is all well, O Thou Unweariable,
Who launchest worlds upon bewildered space,"
Rose in me, "All? or did thy hand grow dull
Building this world that bears a piteous race?
O was it launched too soon or launched too late?
Or can it be a derelict that drifts
Beyond thy ken toward some reef of Fate
On which Oblivion's sand forever shifts?"

IV

The sea grew softer as I questioned — calm
With mystery that like an answer moved,
And from infinity there fell a balm,
The old peace that God *is*, tho all unproved.

The old faith that tho gulfs sidereal stun
The soul, and knowledge drown within their deep,
There is no world that wanders, no not one
Of all the millions, that He does not keep.

THE PROSELYTE RECANTS

(*In Japan*)

Where the fair golden idols
Sit in darkness and in silence
While the temple drum beats solemnly and slow;
Where the tall cryptomerias
Sway in worship round about
And the rain that is falling whispers low;
I can hear strange voices
Of the dead and forgotten,
On the dimly rising incense I can see
The lives I have lived,
And my lives unbegotten,
Namu Amida Butsu pity me!

I was born this karma
Of a mother in Chuzenji,
Where Nantai-zan looks down into the lake;
Where the white-thronged pilgrims
Climb to altars in the clouds
And behold the holy eastern dawn awake.
It was there I wandered
Till a priest of the Christians
With the crucifix he wore compelled my gaze.
In grief I had grown,
So upon its grief I pondered.
Namu Amida Butsu, keep my days!

It was wrong, he told me,
To pray Jiso for my children,
And Binzuru for healing of my ills.
And our gods so many
Were conceived, he said, in sin,
From Lord Shaka to the least upon the hills.

In despair I listened
For my heart beat hopeless,
Not a temple of my land had helped me live.
But alas that day
When I let my soul be christened!
Namu Amida Butsu, O forgive!

For the Christ they gave me
As the only Law and Lotus,
As the only way to Light that will not wane,
May perchance have power
For the people of the West,
But to me he seemed the servitor of pain.
For in pain he perished
As one born to passion:
In some other life no doubt his sin was great,
Tho they told me no,
Those who followed him and cherished.
Namu Amida Butsu, such is fate.

So again to idols
Of the Buddha who is boundless,
While the temple drum is beating thro the rain,
I have turned from treason
Into Meditation's truth,
From the strife the Western god regards as gain.
And if now I'm dying
As the voices tell me,
To the lives that I must live I'll meekly go;
Till my long grief ends
In Nirvana, and my sighing.
Namu Amida Butsu, be it so!

LOVE IN JAPAN

I

Dragon-fly lighting
On the temple-bell,
Whose soul do you bear
On the Day of the Dead?
The soul of my lover?
Ah me, the plighting
Between two hearts
That were never wed!

Dragon-fly, quickly,
The priest is coming!
Oh, the boom
Of the bitter bell!

Now you are gone
And my tears fall thickly.
How of Heaven
Do the gods make Hell!

II

The sêmi is silent
(Autumn rains!)
The wind-bells tinkle
(How chill it is!)
The quick lights come
On the shoji-panes.
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

The maple darkens
(Pale grow I!)
The near night shivers
(The temple fades.)

Haunting love
Will not cease to cry!
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

The wild mists gather
(Ah, my tears!)
The pane-lights vanish
(For some there is rest.)
But for me —
The remembered years!
Come, O Baku,
Eater of dreams!

MAPLE LEAVES ON MIYAJIMA

The summer has come,
The summer has gone,
And the maple leaves lift fairy hands
That ripple upon the winds of dawn
Where the dim pagoda stands.
They ripple and beckon yearningly
To their sister fairies over the sea,
But help comes not,
So they fall and flee
From Autumn over the sands.

And down the mountain
And into the tide,
Some are blown where the sampans glide,
And some are strewn by the temple's side,

And some by the torii.
But Autumn ever
Pursues them till,
As ever before,
She has her will,
And leaves them desolate, dead and still,
Ravished afar and wide;
Leaves them desolate; crying shrill,
"No beauty shall abide!"

TYPHOON

(*At Hong-kong*)

I was weary and slept on the Peak;
The air clung close like a shroud,
And ever the blue-fly at my ear
Hung haunting and hot and loud;
I awoke and the sky was dun
With awe and a dread that soon
Went shuddering thro my heart, for I knew
That it meant typhoon! typhoon!

In the harbour below, far down,
The junks like fowl in a flock
Were tossing in wingless terror, or fled
Fluttering in from the shock.
The city, a breathless bend
Of roofs, by the water strewn,

Lay silent and waiting, yet there was none
Within it but said typhoon!

Then it came, like a million winds
Gone mad immeasurably,
A torrid and tortuous tempest stung
By rape of the fair South Sea.
And it swept like a scud escaped
From craters of sun or moon,
And struck as no power of Heaven could,
Or of Hell — typhoon! typhoon!

And the junks were smitten and torn,
The drowning struggled and cried,
Or, dashed on the granite walls of the sea,
In succourless hundreds died.
Till I shut the sight from my eyes
And prayed for my soul to swoon:
If ever I see God's face, let it
Be guiltless of that typhoon!

PENANG

I want to go back to Singapore
And ship along the Straits,
To a bungalow I know beside Penang;
Where cocoanut palms along the shore
Are waving, and the gates
Of Peace shut Sorrow out forevermore.
I want to go back and hear the surf
Come beating in at night,
Like the washing of eternity over the dead.
I want to see dawn fare up and day
Go down in golden light;
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

I want to go back to Singapore
And up along the Straits

To the bungalow that waits me by the tide.
Where the Tamil and Malay tell their lore
At evening — and the fates
Have set no soothless canker at life's core.
I want to go back and mend my heart
Beneath the tropic moon,
While the tamarind-tree is whispering thoughts
of sleep.
I want to believe that Earth again
With Heaven is in tune.
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

I want to go back to Singapore
And ship along the Straits
To the bungalow I left upon the strand.
Where the foam of the world grows faint before
It enters, and abates
In meaning as I hear the palm-wind pour.
I want to go back and end my days
Some evening when the Cross

On the southern sky hangs heavily far and sad.
I want to remember when I die
That life elsewhere was loss.
I want to go back to Penang! I want to go back!

WHEN THE WIND IS LOW

(To A. H. R.)

When the wind is low, and the sea is soft,
And the far heat-lightning plays
On the rim of the West where dark clouds nest
On a darker bank of haze;
When I lean o'er the rail with you that I love
And gaze to my heart's content;
I know that the heavens are there above —
But you are my firmament.

When the phosphor-stars are thrown from the bow
And the watch climbs up the shroud;
When the dim mast dips as the vessel slips
Thro the foam that seethes aloud;

I know that the years of our life are few,
And fain as a bird to flee,
That time is as brief as a drop of dew —
But you are Eternity.

THE PAGODA SLAVE

(At Shwe Dagohn, in old Rangoon)

All night long the pagoda slave
Hears the wind-bells high in the air
Tinkle with low sweet tongue and grave
    In praise of Lord Gautama.
All night long where the lone spire sends
Its golden height to the starry light
    He hears their tune
    And watches the moon
And fears he shall never reach Nirvana.

Round and round by a hundred shrines
Glittering at the great Shwe's base
Falls the sound of his feet mid lines
    Droned from the sacred Wisdom.

Round and round where the idols gaze
So pitiless on his pained distress
He passes on,
Pale-eyed and wan —
A pariah like the dogs behind him.

Oh, what sin in a life begot
Thousands of lives ago did he sin
That he is now by all forgot,
Even by Lord Gautama?
Oh, what sin, that the lowest shun
His very name as a thing of shame —
A sound to taint
The winds that faint
From the high bells that hear it uttered!

Midnight comes and the hours of morn,
Tapers die and the flowers all
From the most fêted altars: lorn
And desolate is their odour.

Midnight goes, but he watches still
By each cold spire the moon sets fire,
By every palm
Whose silvery calm
Pillar and jewelled porch pray under.

Is it dawn that is breaking? . . No,
Only a star that falls in the sea,
Only a wind-bell's louder flow
Of praise to Lord Gautama.
Faithless dawn! with illusive feet
It comes too late to ease his fate.
He sinks asleep
A helpless heap,
Tho for it he never may reach Nirvana.

THE SHIPS OF THE SEA

Into port when the sun was setting
Rode the ship that bore my love,
Over the breakers wildly fretting,
Under the skies above.

Down to the beach I ran to meet him;
He would come as he had said:
And he came — in a sailor's coffin,
Dead! . . . . . .

O the ships of the sea! . . . . .
The women they set apart! . . .
The tide has nothing now to tell me,
The breakers break my heart!

KINCHINJUNGA

(Which is the next highest of mountains)

I

O white Priest of Eternity, around
Whose lofty summit veiling clouds arise
Of the earth's immemorial sacrifice
To Brahma in whose breath all lives and dies;
O Hierarch enrobed in timeless snows,
First-born of Asia whose maternal throes
Seem changed now to a million human woes,
Holy thou art and still! Be so, nor sound
One sigh of all the mystery in thee found.

II

For in this world too much is overclear,
Immortal Ministrant to many lands,
From whose ice-altars flow to fainting sands

Rivers that each libation poured expands.
Too much is known, O Ganges-giving sire;
Thy people fathom life and find it dire,
Thy people fathom death, and, in it, fire
To live again, tho in Illusion's sphere,
Behold concealed as Grief is in a tear.

III

Wherefore continue, still enshrined, thy rites,
Tho dark Thibet, that dread ascetic, falls
In strange austerity, whose trance appals,
Before thee, and a suppliant on thee calls.
Continue still thy silence high and sure,
That something beyond fleeting may endure —
Something that shall forevermore allure
Imagination on to mystic flights
Wherein alone no wing of Evil lights.

IV

Yea, wrap thy awful gulfs and acolytes
Of lifted granite round with reachless snows.

Stand for Eternity while pilgrim rows
Of all the nations envy thy repose.
Ensheath thy swart sublimities, unscaled.
Be that alone on earth which has not failed.
Be that which never yet has yearned or ailed,
But since primeval Power upreared thy heights
Has stood above all deaths and all delights.

V

And tho thy loftier Brother shall be King,
High-priest be thou to Brahma unrevealed,
While thy white sanctity forever sealed
In icy silence leaves desire congealed.
In ghostly ministrations to the sun,
And to the mendicant stars and the moon-nun,
Be holy still, till East to West has run,
And till no sacrificial suffering
On any shrine is left to tell life's sting.

THE BARREN WOMAN

(*Benares*)

At the burning-ghat, O Kali,
Mother divine and dread,
See, I am waiting with open lips
Over the newly dead.
I am childless and barren; pity
And let me catch the soul
Of him who here on the kindled bier
Pays to Existence toll.

See, by his guileless body
I cook the bread and eat.
Give me the soul he does not need
Now, for conception sweet.
Hear, or my lord and husband
Shall send me from his door

And take to his side a fairer bride
Whose breast shall be less poor.

Oft I have sought thy temples,
By Ganges now I seek,
Where ashes of all the dead are strewn,
And is my prayer not meek?
The ghats and the shrines and the people
That bathe in the holy Stream
Have heard my cry, O goddess high,
Shall I not have my dream?

The women of Oudh and Jaipur
Look on my face with scorn.
Children about their garments cling,
To me shall none be born?
The death-fires quiver faster,
O hasten, goddess, a sign,
That from this doom into my womb
Thy pledge has passed, divine.

Woe! there is naught but ashes,
  Now, and the weepers go.
Lone on the ghat they leave me, lone,
  With but the River's flow.
Kali, I ask not jewels
  Nor justice, beauty nor shrift,
But for the lowest woman's right,
  A child — tho I die of the gift!

BY THE TAJ MAHAL

Under the Indian stars,
Mumtaz Mahal, I am sitting,
Watching them wind their silent way
Over your wistful Tomb;
Watching the crescent prow
Of the moon among them flitting,
Fair as the shallop that bore your soul
To Paradise's Room.

Under the Indian stars,
With palm and peepul about me,
With dome and kiosk and minaret
Mounting against the sky,
I seem to see your face
In all the fairness without me;

In all the sadness that fills my heart
To hear your lover's cry.

Under the Indian stars
I look for your Jasmine Tower,
Along the River whose barren bed
Lies gray beneath the moon.
And thro its magic doors
You seem like a spirit flower,
Wandering back from Allah's bourne
To seek for some lost boon.

Under the Indian stars
I see you softly moving,
Among your jewel-lit maidens there,
A sweet and ghostly queen.
And the scent of attar flung
In your marble font seems proving
That passion never can die from love,
If truly love has been.

Under the Indian stars
He comes, "the Shadow of Allah,"
Jehan, the lord of Magnificence,
The liege who holds your heart.
The silver doors swing back
And alone with him you hallow
The amorous night—whose moon has made
Such visions in me start.

Under the Indian stars—
But the end of all is moaning!
I hear his dying breath that from
Your Tomb shall never die.
For every jasper flower
He set in its dream seems loaning
To Beauty a grief, Mumtaz Mahal,
And unto Fate a sigh.

LOVE'S CYNIC

I

O you poets, ever pretending
  Love is immortal, pipe the truth!
Empty your books of lies, the ending
  Of no passion can be — Youth.
"Heaven," you breathe, "will join the broken?"
  Come, was the Infinite e'er wed,
That He must evermore be thinking
  Of your wedding bed?

II

Pipe the truth! tho it clip the glamour
  Out of your rhymes and rip your dream.
Is death a wench you would enamour,
  Wistful thus, with a word-stream?

No. It is but a Sponge that passes,
One the Appeaseless e'er will squeeze
Back into Lethe's flood — whose lasting
Is eternities.

III

"False!" cry you, "and an unbeseeming
Blasphemy!" — Well, look around.
Is it not only in blaspheming
Truth is ever to be found?
Whether it be, one thing I ask you,
Lovers and poets, tell, I pray,
Was there ever a love-oath ended
Ere the Judgment Day?

IV

"O," you answer, "ill is in all things."
But in an ancient lie what's good?
Is it not better just to call things
What they are — not what we would?

When you are clinging to your mistress,
Love does seem for Eternity.
Cling to her then, but know that Wanting
Fools the best that be.

V

"Yet her brows and her eyes that murmur
All the music," you say, "of God!"
Press her lips but a little firmer —
You will feel that they are — sod.
"But there is living soul beyond them,
And it is love's till all things end?"
Children alone build Paradises
With but pence to spend.

VI

"Ai-ho now! that is like the cynic,"
Pitying runs your poet-smile,
"He has sat at the Devil's clinic
With some dead love up the while."

Dead or alive are one with passions,
Under the potent knife of Truth
They will be seen composed of craving —
And a little ruth.

VII

"Then the world on a lie is living?"
Many a lie has filled its maw!
"Better illusion tho than giving
Such assent to a *loveless* Law?"
Well, there's a saying Socratean
That in his ditch the swine is sure.
Yet does he prove by his contentment
That it will endure?

VIII

Clasp her close! But the truth is in you,
Tho you have rhymed and rammed it down,
Hid it with honey-words that win you
Wreaths that you know bedeck the clown.

Kings they will call you and uplifters
Of your kind? Lord save the mark,
That we are still for fire dependent
On so false a spark.

IX

And so fond! for you hold immortal
What has been born a day or two!
"But it was destined?" Ay, your portal
Only has God to heed — and you!
He with his *trillion* thirsty planets,
All in the throes of death and life,
Surely has time to spare for choosing
Your behooven wife!

X

By my faith, there is not a creature
Mad as a poet, pants the breeze!
Give him a mistress and he'll preach her
As creation's Masterpiece.

Let him but lean for half an hour
Over her lips and he will swear
That he would dive thro death unfathomed
To regain her there.

XI

And believe that his oath is able!
That there is not in all the sea
Water enough to quench the fable
Of his soul's intensity.
Yet there was never a rose that blossomed
And endured beyond its day.
There was never a fire enkindled
But Cold had its way.

XII

"Pessimist," is your mortal answer,
"Wait till the love-wind pierces you!"
Wait? I have been the veriest dancer
To it, and, dupe still, would do

Truth to the death — shall I confess it? —
For but a moment on one breast.
Wherefore I add — and Adam bless it! —
Who loves once is like the rest.

IN A TROPICAL GARDEN

(*Peradeniya, Ceylon*)

I

The sun moves here as a master-mage of nature all day long,
With fingers of heat and light that touch to a mystical growth all things.
The spell of him puts pale Time to sleep, as an opiate strange and strong,
And a waft of his wand, the wind, enchantment brings.

II

The python roots of the rubber-tree, where the cobra slips in peace,
Are wonders that he has waved from the earth as a presage of his power.

And the giant stems of the bamboo-grass, the pool
astounded, sees,
Are a marvel to keep it still hour after hour.

III

The long lianas that reach in dreamy rout from tree
to tree
Are dazed with the sense of sap he calls to the
tangle of their sprays.
The scarlet-hearted hibiscus stands entranced and
the torrid bee
Is husht upon its rim, as in amaze.

IV

And there the palm, the talipot, with its lofty blossom-
spire,
The cocoanut and the slim areca listening await
What sorceries of his trembling rays of equatorial
fire
Will next be laid upon some lesser mate.

V

For all day long it is so; his hot hypnotic eye commands
With steady ray; and the earth obeys and brings enchantment forth.
And all night long in the humid dark the high-voiced hyla-bands
Chant of it in chill strain from South to North.

VI

A wondrous mage is he, in a land where dreams to verity
Are wrought as swift as clouds are wrought, when winds wing up the South.
The mage of a land born of the sea, and destined e'er to be
Beyond all fear of famishing and drouth.

THE WIND'S WORD

A star that I love,
The sea, and I,
Spake together across the night.
"Have peace," said the star,
"Have power," said the sea;
"Yea!" I answered, "and Fame's delight!"

The wind on his way
To Araby
Paused and listened and sighed and said,
"I passed on the sands
A Pharaoh's tomb:
All these did he have — and he is dead."

THE SHRINE OF SHRINES

There is in Egypt by the ancient Nile
A temple of imperishable stone,
Stupendous, columned, hieroglyphed, and known
To all the world as Faith's supremest shrine.
Half in debris it stands, a granite pile
Gigantic, stayed midway in resurrection,
An awe, an inspiration, a dejection
To all who would the cryptic past divine.
The god of it was Ammon, and a throng
Of worshippers from Thebes the royal-gated
Forever at its fervid pylons waited
While priests poured ever a prophetic song.
And yet this Ammon, who gave Egypt laws,
Is not — and is forgot — and never was!

FROM A FELUCCA

A white tomb in the desert,
An Arab at his prayers
Beside the Nile's dark water,
Where the lone camel fares.
An ibis on the sunset,
A slow shadouf at rest,
And in the caravansary
Low music for the guest.

Above the tawny city
A gleam of minarets,
Resounding the muezzin's
Clear call as the sun sets.
A mystery, a silence,
A breathing of strange balm,
A peace from Allah on the wind
And on the sky his calm.

THE EGYPTIAN WAKES

I woke at night in my eternal tomb
The desert sands had hid a thousand years,
And heard the Nile-crier across the gloom
Calling, "The flood has come! beseech the gods!"
I rose in haste, and ran amid blind fears
To the barterers of grain and oil and wine,
Culled for the praise and service of divine
Great Isis, by the slave who for her plods.
But as I passed along, woe! what was this,
Strange faces and strange fashions and strange fanes
Standing upon the midnight; Oh, the pains
That swept across my startled thought's abyss!
I moaned. My body crumbled into dust.
And then my soul fled Here — where all souls must.

THE IMAM'S PARABLE

Behold, the wind of the Desert rose,
  Khamsin, in a shroud of sand,
And swept the Libyan waste, across
  To far Somali-land.
His voice was thick with the drouth of death
And smote the earth as a burning breath,
Or as a curse which Allah saith
  Unto a demon-band.

The caravan from the oasis
  Of palm-engirt Kûrkûr
Shuddered and couched in shaken heaps,
  The horror to endure.
Its mighty Sheik, like a soul in Hell
Who longs for the lute of Israfel,

Longed for the trickle of Keneh's well,
Imperishably pure!

Three days he longed, and the wind three days
About him whirled the shroud.
Then did a shrill dawn bring the sun —
And a gaunt vulture-crowd.
A few bleak bones on the Desert still
Lie for the Judgment Day to thrill
Again into life — if Allah will:
Let not your heart be proud.

SONGS OF A SEA-FARER

I

Many are on the sea to-day
  With all sails set.
The tide rolls in a restive gray,
  The wind blows wet.
The gull is weary of his wings,
And I am weary of all things.

Heavy upon me longing lies,
  My sad eyes gaze
Across sad leagues that sink and rise
  And sink always.
My life has sunk and risen so,
I'd have it cease awhile to flow.

II

All the winds of the sea weary,
  All the waves of the sea rest,
All the wants of my heart settle
  Softly now in my breast.
All the stars that in heaven anchor,
  Golden buoys of Elysian light,
Send me across the gulf promise
  That I am faring right.

So while clouds that are left lonely
  At the gates of the far West
Wait, so still, for the moon's coming
  To renew their quest,
I am held by a low vesper
  Haunting afar the vague twilight,
Then with my soul at peace whisper,
  Hallowedly, good-night.

A SONG OF THE SECTS

(*In a Jerusalem tavern*)

A Latin and Greek, praise God, are we, Armenian and Copt,
And we're all drunk as drunk can be, for we've together sopped.
Not one of us but spits at the creed the others mouth and purr,
But we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Armenian sings

The Copt comes out of Egypt-land and with a braggart face
He'll tell you that his fathers piled the Pyramids in place.

In his Monophysite Christ we set no faith, the blasphemer!
But we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Latin sings

The Greek will curse you if you call his Ikons images,
And damns your soul to Hell — no purgatory, if you please!
About Procession of the Ghost he's prickly as a burr,
But he believes, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Copt sings

Of heretics God leaves unburnt, Armenians are worst,
They will not celebrate the Day, that was for Christ the first.
No wine with water mixed for them, as well mix heathen myrrh —
Or not believe, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Greek sings

The Latin swears his Roman Pope is judge infallible.
Wherefore you may be very sure the Devil from his skull
Will drink a toast unto all liars, who such a lie aver —
Tho they believe, as we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

The Four again

A Latin and Greek, praise God, are we, Armenian and Copt,
And we're all drunk as drunk can be, for we've together sopped.
Not one of us but hankers to hang all Jews on a Juniper,
For we all believe, we all believe, in the Holy Sepulchre!

THE CITY

Soft and fair by the Desert's edge,
  And on the dim blue edge of the sea,
Where white gulls wing all day and fledge
Their young on the high cliff's sandy ledge,
There is a city I have beheld,
Sometime or where, by day or dream,
I know not which, for it seems enspelled
  As I am by its memory.

Pale minarets of the Prophet pierce
  Above it into the white of the skies,
And sails enchanted a thousand years
Flit at its feet while fancy steers.
No face of all its faces to me
Is known — no passion of it or pain.
It is but a city by the sea,
  Enshrined forever beyond my eyes!

VIA AMOROSA

(*To A. H. R.*)

When we two walk, my love, on the path
  The moon makes over the sea,
To the end of the world where sorrow hath
  An end that is ecstasy,
Should we not think of the other road
  Of wearying dust and stone
Our feet would fare did each but care
  To follow the way alone?

When we two slip at night to the skies
  And find one star that we keep
As a trysting-place to which our eyes
  May lead our souls ere sleep,
Should we not pause for a little space
  And think how many must sigh

Because they gaze over starry ways
With no heart-comrade by?

When we two then lie down to our dreams
That deepen still the delight
Of our wandering where stars and streams
Stray in immortal light,
Should we not grieve with the myriads
From East of earth to West
Who lay them down at night but to drown
The longing for some loved breast?

Ah, yes, for life has a thousand gifts,
But love it is gives life.
Who walks thro his world alone e'er lifts
A soul that is sorrow-rife.
But they to whom it is given to tread
The moon-path and not sink
Can ever say the unhappiest way
Earth has is fair to the brink.

DUSK AT HIROSHIMA

Softly the bamboo bends
As the sun sinks down unglowing,
Softer the willow ends
A sigh to the dusk around.
Quickly the brief bat wends
His flittering way, tho knowing
How numb is the autumn air,
That is husht of the city's sound.

Temple and thatch and stream
Are forgetting the light that lingers,
Mountain and mist in dream
Already are lost, afar.
Faintingly comes the beam
Of the moon—then viewless fingers
That tinkle a samisen,
And astir on the East is a star.

IN A SHINTO TEMPLE GARDEN

Under the torii, robed in green,
The old priest creeps to his shrine.
Over the bridge the still stork stands,
The crow caws not in the pine.

Far in the distance bugles blow,
War's bloody memory wakes.
The priest prays on — for his sons that
are dead,
And the heart within him breaks.

FAR FUJIYAMA

Against the phantom gold of failing skies
I see the ghost of Fujiyama rise
And think of the innumerable eyes
  That have beheld its vision sunset-crowned.
The peasant in his field of rice or tea,
The prince in gardens dreaming by the sea,
The priest to whom the sêmi in the tree
  Was but some shrilling soul's incarnate sound.

And as I think upon them, lo, the trance
Of backward time and distant circumstance,
Of Karma's all-remembering necromance,
  Lies suddenly before my boundless sight.
It is as if, a moment, Buddhahood
Were given to me; as if understood
At last were vague Nirvana's vaguer good;
  As if time were dissolved in living light.

ON MIYAJIMA MOUNTAIN

To A. H. R.

Out on the sea the sampans ride
  And the mountains brim with mist and sun.
O, the spell of Japan again
    Is on us!
The spell of the old enchanting East,
Of Buddha and many a blissful priest,
The spell that has never, never ceased
    To haunt us!

Glad we behold the temple-tops
  And the lanterns in religious row
Standing, like acolytes of stone,
    To serve us.
And o'er them the old pagoda prays

Blessing upon their dreaming days,
And on the eightfold sacred ways
From Sorrow!

Ah, and the torii too is there,
Where the sea enters to his shrine
When for its tidal mystery
'Tis ready.
He enters now, as the nuptial sea
Of love first entered our hearts, to be
Lord of their tides eternally,
And Master!

OLD AGE

I have heard the wild geese,
  I have seen the leaves fall,
There was frost last night
  On the garden wall.
It is gone to-day
  And I hear the wind call.
  The wind? . . . that is all.

If the swallow will light
  When evening is near;
If the crane will not scream
  Like a soul in fear;
I will think no more
  Of the dying year,
  And the wind, its seer.

ON THE YANG-TSE-KIANG

Down the Yang-tse bat-wing junk
And tatterdemalion sampan glide,
Sails of brown and black and yellow swinging.
Down the Yang-tse bat-wing junks
Fish-eyed and gaudy take the tide,
Forth to the sea in sloth they ride,
The coolies singing.

Off in the field the peasant toils
And along the canal the low tows slip,
Fruit of the red persimmon piled upon them.
Off in the field the peasant toils —
With lip and brow the dull years strip
Bare as a tomb — for life's gray grip
Has grimly drawn them.

High on the hill the yamên rests
And the temple beside it sleeps in sun,
Far in the distance faints the city dreary.
High on the hill the yamên rests,
And dun dead shadows o'er it run:
This is the land where Time begun
And now grows weary.

THE SEA-ARMIES

The wild sea-armies led by the wind
Are following in our wake,
White-crested shouting millions moving on.
They have broken their camp of Calm and o'er
The world rebellion make,
With banner of cloud and mist above them drawn.

They have heard the call of infinite Death,
The ordering of his word,
"Arise, go forth and conquer where ye can;
For that is the only law ye know,
Its mandate men have heard,
Let them beware when they your path would span.

"Let them beware, for I am lord
Of all earth dares to name,

And unto you is given most my might.
Ride on, ye have many a ship to rend,
And many a mast to maim,
And many a land to lash and soul to fright."

So on they ride, a ravaging horde,
From shore to shuddering shore,
Beyond us in the bleak star-buried dawn;
Nor know that when they have camped again
And sleep, Life will restore
Unto her world the hope they have withdrawn.

THE CHRISTIAN IN EXILE

(*Mandalay*)

The palms along the old fort wall are paling,
The mountains in the evening light are red,
The moon has dropped into the moat from heaven,
A spell barbaric over all is spread.
But what is that to him, a stranger lonely,
In a land strange to all his faith and dim?
He cares not for old splendours, he would only
Hear on the air a simple Sabbath hymn.

The paddy-birds their snowy flight are taking
From the tall tamarind unto their nest,
The bullock-carts along the road are creaking,
The bugles o'er the wall are sounding rest.

On a calm jetty looking off to Mecca
Sons of Mahomet watch the low day's rim.
He too is waiting for it — with an echo
Upon his lips of a believer's hymn.

The red gate-towers rise against the twilight,
The palace of the heathen king is hid,
The white bridge bent across the moat beside it
Seems now of all unholinesses rid.
He wishes it were so with all this city
Whose Buddha-built pagodas skyward swim;
But he can only gaze on them and pity —
And sing within his heart a Christian hymn.

THE PARSEE WOMAN

(*At Bombay*)

Cast me out from among you,
I will not lay my child
There, aloft, where the vultures
May clamour for him, wild!
The earth you say is holy,
Not to be soiled by death,
And a Parsee still should hold divine
What Zoroaster saith.

Ay, and so I will hold it,
But see his pale sweet face,
As pure as the palest flower
Left dead in Spring's embrace.
The sun we worship daily
Shrined it for seven years,

Then shall it go to cruel beaks,
There where the sea-wind veers?

No, no, no! tho you send me
A beggar from your door,
You, my lord, whom I honour,
And you, his sisters four,
To whom there have come no children
To make your bosoms feel
How even a thought so full of throe
Can make my sick brain reel.

Ah, you are deaf? you scorn me
And loathe, as a thing defiled?
My lord, I am but a woman
Who longs to see her child
Laid safe in a tomb, entreasured
Under the shrouding sod.
O would I had never given birth,
Or that earth had no God!

SHAH JEHAN TO MUMTAZ MAHAL

I see as in a pale mirage
The palm that o'er you sways,
The waters of the Jumna wan are beating.
One pearl-cloud, like a far-off Taj,
A dome of grief betrays —
Its beauty as was yours will be too fleeting!

The world is wider than I knew
Now that your face is gone!
While you were here no destiny seemed boundless.
So I am lost and find no clue
To any dusk or dawn!
Life has become a quest decayed and groundless

Come back! come back ! or let me find
The jungle leads at last

Unto your lips and bosom recreated!
O somewhere I again must wind
My arms about you, cast
Into one word my love all unabated!

PRINCESS JEHANARA

Where the road leads from Delhi to the South,
And dingy camel-trains creep in the dust
Past ruin-heaps of old Firozabad
And Indropat unpitied of the drouth;
By a lone tree, above a Pool whose sad
Prayer-water all the turban-people trust,
Is a heat-hidden tomb, and on it just
A few faint blades of bent and grieving grass.
"Jehanara's it is — " with ready mouth
A Moslem tells the travel-worn who pass
To lordlier-rising tombs — "Jehanara's.
One time her heart, heavy with pity, said:
The covering of the poor is only grass,
Let no more then be mine when I am dead."

A SINGHALESE LOVE LAMENT

As the cocoanut-palm
That pines, my love,
Away from the sound
Of the planter's voice,
Am I, for I hear
No more resound
Your song by the pearl-strewn sea!
The sun may come
And the moon wax round,
And in its beam
My mates may rejoice,
But I feast not
And my heart is dumb,
As I long, O long, for thee!

In the jungle-deeps,
Where the cobra creeps,
The leopard lies
In wait for me.
But O, my love,
When the daylight dies
There is more to my dread than he!
Harsh lonely tears
That assail my eyes
Are worse to bear,
For the misery
That makes them well
Is the long, long years
That I moan away from thee!

O again, again,
In my katamaran
A-keel would I push
To your palmy door!
Again would I hear
The heave and hush

Of your song by the plantain-tree.
But far away
Do I toil and crush
The hopes that arise
At my sick heart's core.
For never near
Does it come, the day
That draws me again to thee!

ON THE ARABIAN GULF

From a far minaret of faithful cloud
A wraith-muezzin of the sunset cried
Over the sea that swung with sultan pride,
"Allah is Beauty, there is none beside!
Allah is Beauty, not to be denied
By Death or any Infidel dark-browed!"

And every wave that worshipped, every one
Under the mosque of heaven arching high,
Lifted a white crest with assenting sigh
And answered, "Let all gods but Allah die,
Yea, let all gods! until the world shall cry,
Beauty alone is left under the sun!"

THE RAMESSID

Upon an image of immortal stone,
Seated and vast, the moon of Luxor falls,
Lending to it a stillness that appals,
A mystery Osirian and strange.
The hands outplaced upon the knees in lone
And placid majesty reveal the power
Of Egypt in her most triumphal hour,
The calm of tyranny that cannot change.
It is of that Great king, who heard the cries
Of millions toil to lift him to the skies,
Who saw them perish at their task like flies,
Yet let no eye of pity o'er them range.
What rue, then, if his desecrated face
Rots now at Cairo in a mummy case?

IMMORTAL FOES

At Bedrashein between the pyramids
I saw the wingèd sun fold up his pinions
And sink into the nether world's dominions
Where Set sent ill upon the Egyptian dead.
I saw the ancient Desert, that outbids
The Nile for the date-lands between them spread,
Fling over Memphis that is vanishèd,
Another shroud of sand, then bid his minions,
The winds, lie down upon their boundless bed.

I saw where temples vowed to Serapis
And granite splendours men name Pharaonic
Are kept by Time in silence and sardonic
Concealment — mummied in deep mystic tombs.

And when the stars came out in quiet bliss,
I heard Eternity — with all its dooms
Past and to come — sound softly the mnemonic
Of Death who waits all worlds that Life enwombs.

THE CONSCRIPT

The camel at the old sakiyeh
  Toils around and round.
Aweary is he of the Nile
  And of the wailing sound
Of the slow wheel he turns all day
To lift the water on its way
Over the fields of Ahmed Bey,
  That with green grain abound.

Aweary is he, too, of fellàheen
  Who compel him on,
With thick-voiced chanting till the day
  Over the West has gone.
For the bold Desert was he made,
The Bedouin, his lord, to aid,

Not for this peasant wheel of trade
That ever must be drawn.

But on he toils while dahabiyeh
And dark felucca glide
Below him o'er the glassy flow
Of the gray river's tide.
On, on, and then at night lies down,
In sleep the servile day to drown —
Like all whom Life turns with a frown
From their true fate aside.

THE CROSS OF THE SEPULCHRE

Within the Holy Sepulchre, breast-high,
There is a cross uncounted lips have kissed,
Millions the world to dust has long dismissed,
Millions that now hope of it but to die.
Pilgrims, I saw, from out far fervid lands
Of superstition, North and West and South,
Bend to it each a trembling, reverent mouth,
Then kneel where Christ was said to loose
Death's bands.
And then I wondered if He who believed
In the One God were wounded sore by this,
Whether He shrinks at each ecstatic kiss,
Or knowing how humanity is grieved,
Knows too that it is better to give Hope
Than Truth, if only one is in man's scope.

ALPINE CHANT

I'm tramping thro the mountains,
They are rising white around me,
Snow peaks like patriarchs
  That Winter has enthroned.
I'm tramping up the valleys
Where the cataracts sound me
Thunders they have shrilly
  From eternity intoned.

I'm tramping thro the mountains,
With the clouds for my companions
Soft clouds that float and cling
  From crag to cloven crag.
I'm passing by the chalets
That o'erhang the high cañons,

Passing where the shepherds
And their fair flocks lag.

I'm tramping thro the mountains
Where the pines in proud procession
Climb like a hardy host
To halo-heights of sun.
I'm listening for the sallies
Of the avalanche'—its Hessian
Hurl of ice and granite
Into gulfs Avernian.

I'm tramping thro the mountains
And the wind is yodling to me
Yearnings of the glaciers
To flow to summer lands.
I'm treading up the valleys
With no wanting to undo me —
For to-day I'm goalless
And the great God understands!

THE MAN OF MIGHT

No moment drooped between his thought and action,
No morrow died between his dream and deed.
Within his soul there was no fatal faction
That could betray him in his hour of need.

IN TIME OF AWE

The fierce sea-sunset over the world
  Springs like a wounded spirit.
And ships in the gray gale's lair have furled
  Their sails — well may they fear it!

The night will be but a monstrous seethe
  Of terrors elemental.
And all the lives in the sea beneath
  By fear shall be made gentle;

And sink down, down to the nether deeps,
  Below the foam and fretting,
Below the lonely wreck Death keeps
  To guard him 'gainst forgetting.

And there in the ominous vast calm
  They'll harbour fear-enchanted;

There float till again they feel the qualm
Of hunger thro them panted.

And then once more far up will they spring,
To drift and float and plunder.
To the sea, O God, does horror cling,
And haunting past all wonder.

SUNRISE IN UTAH

The dun sand-cliffs that break the desert's sea
Rose suddenly upon my sight at dawn,
And terrible in an eternity
Of death took silently the sunrise on.
Purple funereal from rifted skies
Swept down across their proud sterility,
Only to die as here all glory dies,
On barrenness I did not dream could be.
O God, for a bird-song! or opening lips
Of but one flower upon the fatal air,
For but the voice of water as it drips,
Or stir of leaves the day-wind makes aware!
O God, for these, for life! or from the face
Of the world wipe so irreparable a place!

CONSOLATION

I

Come to me, shadows, down the hill,
Lie softly at my feet.
The sun has worked his will
And the day is done.
Come to me softly and distil
Your dews and dreams, that heat
And hours of heartless glare
Have overrun.

II

Come to me, shadows, down the hill
And bring with you the night,
Fire-flies and the whippoorwill
And ah, the moon —

Whose soft interpretings can still
The tongues of wrong and right,
And tangled hopes and fears
That haunt the noon.

III

Come to me, shadows, down the hill —
And let there follow Sleep, —
God's ancient tidal Will
That overflows
The fretted world — effacing ill,
And in its soothing sweep
Murmuring more of mercy
Than man knows.

WAVES

The evening sails come home
With twilight in their wings.
The harbour-light across the gloam
Springs;
The wind sings.

The waves begin to tell
The sea's night-sorrow o'er,
Weaving within their ancient spell
More
Than earth's lore.

The rising moon wafts strange
Low lures across the tide,
On which my dim thoughts seem to range,
Stride
Upon stride,

Until, with flooding thrill,
They seem at last to blend
With waves that from the Eternal Will
Wend,
Without end.

VIS ULTIMA

There is no day but leads me to
A peak impossible to scale,
A task at which my hands must fail,
A sea I cannot swim or sail.
There is no night I suffer thro
But Destiny rules stern and pale:
And yet what I am meant to do
I will do, ere Death drop his veil.

And it shall be no little thing,
Tho to oblivion it fall,
For I shall strive to it thro all
That can imperil or appal.

So at each morning's trumpet-ring
  I mount again, less slave and thrall,
And at the barriers gladly fling
  A fortitude that scorns to crawl.

MEREDITH

What am I reading? He is dead?
He the great interpreter
And seer — England's noblest head?
What am I reading? It is hushed?
The deepest voice that life had found
To read a century profound
With all time's seethe and stir?

Why, it is but a scanty score
Of days, since, at his side,
Clasping his hand with more than pride,
I felt that the immortal tide
Of his great mind would long break o'er
The cold command of Death.
Still in my ear is echoing

The surf of his strong words, and still
Against the wild trees on the Hill
His cottage sheltered under,
I see the toss of his gray locks,
Like Lear's — for he had felt the sting
Of all too greatly giving
The kingdom of his mind to those
Who for it held him mad.

O England, guard thy living
Like him from a like fate!
For not the mighty thunder
Of thy proud name from all the rocks
Of all the world can compensate
A nation whom no Song makes glad,
And whom no Seer makes great.

CHARLES DI TOCCA

First Published 1903

To
MY WIFE

ACT I

CHARACTERS

CHARLES DI TOCCA	*Duke of Leucadia, Tyrant of Arta, etc.*
ANTONIO DI TOCCA	*His Son*
HÆMON	*A Greek Noble and Poet.*
BARDAS	*His Friend*
CARDINAL JULIAN	*The Pope's Legate*
AGABUS	*A mad Monk*
CECCO	*Seneschal of the Castle*
FULVIA COLONNA	*Under the Duke's protection*
HELENA	*Sister to Hæmon*
GUILIA	*Serving Fulvia*
PAULA	*Serving Helena*
LYGIA, PHAON, ZOE, BASIL	*Revellers*

NALDO, *a Boy, and* DIOGENES, *a Philosopher*

A Captain of the Guard, Soldiers, Guests, Attendants, etc.

ACT I

SCENE: *The Island Leucadia. A ruined temple of Apollo near the town of Pharo. Broken columns and stones, making breaches, are strewn or stand desolutely about. It is night—the moon rising.* ANTONIO, *who has been waiting impatiently, seats himself on a stone. By a road near the ruins* FULVIA *enters, cloaked.*

Antonio (*turning*). Helen—!

Fulvia. A comely name, my lord.

Antonio. Ah, you?
My father's unforgetting Fulvia?

Fulvia. At least not Helena, whoe'er she be.

Antonio. And did I call you so?

Fulvia. Unless it is
These stones have tongue and passion.

Antonio. No; the night,
Recalling dreams of dim antiquity,
Was at some spell upon me. But whence are
Your steps, so late, alone?

Fulvia. From the Cardinal,
Who has but come.

Antonio. What comfort there?

Fulvia. A vain.
The moody bolt of Rome broods over us.

Antonio. My father will not bind his heresy?

Fulvia. You with him walked to-day. What said he?

Antonio. I?
With him to-day? Ah, true. What may be done?

Fulvia. He has been strange of late and silent, laughs,
Seeing the Cross; but softly and almost
As if it were some sweet thing that he loved.

Antonio (*looking off*). As if it— Pardon, he is strange, you say?

Fulvia. Stranger than is Antonio his son,

Who but for some expectancy is vacant.

[*She moves to go.*

Antonio. Stay, Fulvia—I am so; but stay, listen.
Last night I dreamed of you. In vain, it seemed,
You strove to reach me out of swift Charybdis

[*A low cry. They start.*

Fulvia. A woman's voice!

[*Looking down road.*

And hasting here!

Antonio (*anxiously*). Alone?

Fulvia. No, with another.

Antonio. Then go, Fulvia.
Go, go! 'tis one who comes to speak with me.

[*She goes.*

[*Enter* HELENA, *frightedly, with* PAULA.

My Helena, what is it? You are wan
And tremble as a blossom quick with fear
Of shattering. What is it?

Helena. Say not true!
Oh, say 'tis not!

Antonio. What have you chanced upon?

Helena. Say no to me, say no, and no again!

Antonio. Say no, and no?

Helena. Yes; I am reeling, wrung,
With one glance o'er a precipice of ill!
Say his incanted prophecies spring from
No power that's more than frenzied fantasy!

Antonio. Who prophesies? Now, who upon this isle
More than the visible and present day
Can gather to his eye? Tell me.

Helena. The monk—
Ah, chide me not!—mad Agabus—who can
Unsphere dark spirits from their evil airs
And show with them all things of love or death,
Seized me as I stole to thee. With wild looks
And wilder lips he vented on my ear
Bodings more wild than both. "Sappho!" he cried,
"Sappho! Sappho!" and probed my eyes as if
Destiny moved dark-visaged in their deeps.
Then tore his rags and moaned, "so young to cease!"

Gazed then out into awful vacancy,
And whispered hotly, following his gaze,
"The Shadow! Shadow!"

Antonio (*half-moved*). And then went his way?
Doing no harm save with his superstitions?
Why, be it then, my Helena!

Helena. But he
Has often cleft the future with his ken,
Seen thro it to some lurking mar of love,
Or the dim knell of death heard and revealed.

Antonio. He has not! but is only a witless monk
Who thinks God lives to fill his prophecies.

Helena. I would he were! But well you know 'tis said
In youth he loved one treacherous, and in
Avenge has made fierce league with Hell that lends him
Sight of all ills that rise to human hearts.—
Yet look not so, my lord! I'll trust thine eyes
That tell me love is master of all times—
And thou of all love master!

Antonio. And of thee?
Then will the winds return unto the night,
[*Clasps her.*
And flute us lover songs of happiness!
Helena. Nor dare upon a duller note while here
We tryst beneath the moon?
Antonio. My perfect Greek!
Anthene looks again out of thy lids,
And Venus trembles in thy every limb!
Helena. Not Venus! (*with new dread*) ah, not Venus!
Antonio. Now; again?
Helena. 'Twas at this temple's ancient gate she found
Wounded Adonis dead, and to forget,
Like Sappho leaped, 'tis said, from yonder cliff
Down to the waves' oblivion below!
Antonio. And will you read such terror in a tale?
Helena. Forgive me, then.
Antonio. Too quickly you're unstrung.
And yet—there is— [*Troubled.*

Helena. Is what, Antonio?

Antonio. Nothing; I who must ebb with you and flow,
A little was moved.

Helena. Antonio? . . . Not you?
I'll change my tears to laughter, if a fancy
May so unmettle—you!

Antonio. Well, let us off,
My Helena, with these numb awes that wind
About our joy.

Helena. Thy kiss, then; for it can
Drive all gloom out of the world.

Antonio. And thine, my own,
On Fate's hard brow would shame it of all frown!

Helena. Yet is thine mightier, for no frown can be
When no more gloom's in the world!

Antonio. Then no frown is!
(*Teasingly.*) And yet—if I pressed other—

Helena. Other, my lord?
[*Stands from him.*

You should not know that any other lips
Could e'er be pressed. I'll have no kiss but his
Who is all blind to every mouth but mine.

Antonio. Oh?—Well! . . .

Helena. "Oh, well!"—Then it is well
I go.

Antonio. Perhaps.

Helena. "Perhaps!"

Antonio. Goodnight!

Helena (*feigning*). Goodnight.

Antonio (*turning*). Still here?

Helena. There's gloom in the world again.

Antonio (*with a kiss*). Then now 'tis gone!

Helena. Not all, I think.

Antonio. Two for so small a gloom?

Helena (*closing her eyes*).
The vainest glooms to-night seem ominous,
As cloud-flakes flung upward before the west.
[*Suddenly starting,*
But who?—who comes? [*Looks off.*

Antonio. Helena!

Helena. Agabus!

AGABUS *enters, unkempt, distracted.*

Agabus. O—lovers! lovers!—Lord have none of them!

Antonio. Good monk—

Agabus. Oh, yes, yes, yes. You'd give me gold
To pray for your two souls. (*Crossing himself.*)
Not I! not I!
For know you not love's brewed of lust and fire?
It gnaws and burns until the Shadow—Sir,
[*Searching about the air.*
Have you not seen a Shadow pass?

Antonio. A Shadow?

Agabus. Silent and cold. A-times they call him Death.
I'd have him for my brain—it shakes with fever.
[*Goes searching as before.* HELENA *is motionless.*

Antonio. There; he is gone.

Helena. Yes—gone.

Antonio. And you are calm?

Helena. Of impotence—as one who in a tomb
Awakes and waits.

Antonio. He is but mad.

Helena. But mad.

Antonio. Yet fear you? still?

Helena. It is as if the earth
Were wind under my feet. As if . . . Antonio!

[*A column she has leant against falls. Her terror is greater.*

Antonio! see, see, it is fallen! . . . fallen!

Antonio. And if it has, are all things thus become
Omen and dread to you?

Helena. Oh, but it is
The pillar grieving Venus leant upon
Ere to forget she leaped—and lonely wrote,

"When falls this pillar tall and proud
Let lovers weave their shroud."

Antonio. Mere myth! a myth!
You must not, Helena!

Helena. The shroud! . . . the shroud!
It coldly winds about us—coldly—coldly!—
But touch me lest I sink, Antonio,
In this unnatural awe. (*He takes her to him.*) Ah,
how thine arms
Warm the cold moan and misery of fear
Out of my veins!

Antonio. Then, we will weave no shroud—
But wedding robes and wreaths and pageantry!
And you shall be my Sappho! but thro' days
Such as shall legend ecstasy about
Our knitted names when distant lovers dream!

Helena. I'll fear no more, then . . .

Antonio. Yet— ?

Helena. My lord, let us
Unloose this strangling secrecy and be
Open in love!
And let us tell thy father
And tell my brother Hæmon of our hope
And sweet betrothal!

Antonio. That cannot be—now.

Helena. It cannot be! and you a god? I'll bow
Before your eyes no more. Say that it can!

Antonio. Not yet—not now. For Hæmon is, we know,
Suspicious and bitter—
And must be won with service.
And you are Greek—a name I never heard
Pass to my father's ear, till yesterday,
But it came out his mouth headlong with curses.

Helena. Yet he has smiled upon me oft of late.

Antonio. My father? No—or smiling only dreamt
And saw you not.

Helena. Then have you also dreamt!
For he looked as do you, when, under the moon,
You call me—

Antonio. I will call you so no more.

Helena. And why, my lord?

Antonio. Because, O Heart of me.
Words, were they miracles of beauty,
Could not reveal you—

More than a taper's ray the rim of night!

[*A pause.*

Helena. And yet—

Antonio. And yet—?

Helena. I'll hold you not too false
If sometimes they trip out upon your lips.

Antonio. Or to my father's eye?

Helena. If for thy sake.

Antonio. He smiled, you say?

Helena. As one forgetting pain.

[*They sit.*

Antonio. Perhaps. For some unwonted softness seems
Near him. On yesterday he asked for song,
Dancing and wine.

Helena. Then tell him! For we live
In peril years, and secrecy must seem
Yoke-mate of guilt!

Antonio. Fear has bewitched you, fie!

Helena. No: but love's wave, Antonio, has cast

Us high—and now I would do all lest—(*starting up*)
Paula!

[*Turns, fearful.*

Paula (*who has approached from watching*).
My lady, some one comes.

Helena. Who?

Paula. I saw not.

Helena. Antonio! . . . if it were—Hæmon!

Antonio (*cloaking her*). Wish it!

Helena. You'll wait him? Broodings smoulder in his moods,
Fevered and bitter.

Antonio. Kindness, then, shall quench them!

[*Kisses her.*

But now, away. And lose this dread—to be
By day my lark, by night my nightingale—
Not a sad bird of boding!

Helena. As I have?

Antonio. Remember, you are only a little stept
From your life's shore, out on the infinite
Of love—whose air is awe and mystery.

Helena (*going*). Think of me oft. At dawn all will be well.

Antonio (*seeing them off then turning quickly to watch*). My father it is! . . . And Hæmon with him? friendly?

[*Steps aside. Enter* CHARLES *and* HÆMON.

Charles. So! you will go no farther with me?

Hæmon. No, Sir, if you'll grant it. I——

Charles (*twittingly*). Some rendezvous? Who is she? Ah, young blood and Spring and night!

Hæmon. No rendezvous, my lord.

Charles. Some lay, then, you Would muse on?

Hæmon. Yes, a lay.

Charles. And one of love? The word, you see, founts easy to my lips. (*Archly.*) 'Tis recent in my thought—as you will learn.

Hæmon. How, sir, and when?

Charles. Oh! . . . when? Be not surprised.
Well, to the lay!

[*Goes.*

Hæmon. Yes, to the lay! while here
He wastes the bread of honesty and age
With bloody, drunken soldiery who lust
To tear all innocence away and robe
Our loveliest in shame! . . . While me, a Greek,
He suddenly befriends.

Antonio (*stepping out*). Hæmon——

Hæmon. Ah! you?

Antonio. There's room between your tone and courtesy.

Hæmon. And shall be while I'm readier to bend
Over a beggar's pain than prince's fingers.

Antonio. I think you know me better——

Hæmon. Than to believe
You're not Antonio, son of Charles di Tocca?

Antonio. I'd be your friend.

Hæmon. So would he—and he smiles.

Antonio. There are deep reasons with me.

Hæmon. As with him!

A miracle, if you are not his heir!

Antonio. It would be well, I think, for you to listen.

My confidence once curbed—

Hæmon. May bite and paw?

And trample? Let it! . . . Go, and threaten cowards.

For were you Tamerlane and mine the skull

To cap your bloody foes, I'd—!

Antonio. Still be blind?

Hæmon. To your fair graces? No, my lord, your sword

And doublet are sublimely worn, sublimely!

Your tresses, too, would tempt the fairest fingers.

Antonio. And yet my anger's silent.

Hæmon. Give it tongue, then,

And not this subtle pride,—as Bardas says.

You, you would be my friend? A friend to me?

Did not your father

Into a sick and sunless keep cast mine
Because he was a Greek—and still a Greek—
And would not be a slave? And has his power
Not whispered death about him as a pest?
He, for a friend? and you? and I on him
Should lean for succor?

Antonio. Yes. For tho' he's stained,
The times are tyrannous and men, like beasts,
Find mercy preservation's enemy.
And you are heated with a doubtful wrong.
But here's my hand as pledge—

Hæmon (*refusing it*). That you'll be false?

[*Enter* BARDAS.

Or that . . . Bardas!

Bardas (*stops*). Hæmon, I've sought you. Ah,
And you, my lord. My way was to your door
With a request.

Antonio. Which gladly I will hear,
And, if I can, will grant.

Bardas. My haste is blunt—
As is my tongue.

Antonio. Then yield it us at once.

Bardas. At your command. Hæmon, I love your sister! [*Astonishment.*

Not love! I am idolatrous before
Her foot's least print and cannot breathe or pray
But where she's sometime been and left a heaven!

Hæmon. And therefore you will cry it to the streets?

Bardas. Necessity's not over-delicate.
So my request, my lord, is—sue for me.
You have been apt in all love's skill, they say.
Your words, sown on her ear,
Would not lie fruitless tho' they bade her yield
More than her most.

Hæmon (*flushing*). Bardas! . . .

Bardas. Hæmon! peace!
Antonio, answer.

Antonio. To this strange request?
Helena, whom I've seen, would little thank
The eyes that told her own where they should love.

Bardas. I saved your life, my lord.

Antonio. And I have searched
Occasion often for a worthy chance
Well to repay you. But if it is this
I am distrest. I cannot plead your suit.

Bardas. You cannot, or you will not?

Antonio. I have said.
Ask me for service on your foes, for faith,
Gold or devotion, friendship you're aloof to,
For all that will and honor well may give
With nicety, and I'll be wings and heart—
More—drudge, to your desire.

Hæmon. Noble! my lord.
And he shall rue this shame he goads me with.
Why have you shown it here?

Bardas. Do you ask why?
[*To* ANTONIO.
My lord, a little since, your father's guard
Gave a command in seal to Helena
Upon the streets to instantly repair
Unto his halls—which she must henceforth *honor*.
You knew it not?

Antonio (*amazed*). My father!

Bardas. Oh! well feigned.
Be sure none will suspect he is too old
For knightly feat like this or that he has
A son!

Antonio. To Helena! my father! sealed?

[BARDAS *turns away. A pause.*

Hæmon (*clenched*). So it was there, my lord, your friendship moved?

Antonio (*to* BARDAS). Do you mean that—?

Bardas. Until this hour I thought
The race of Charles di Tocca bold, or other—
But empty of all lies in deed or speech.

Antonio. Then you are mad—mad! now to suspect it.
I'm naked of this thing and hide no guilt
Either in word or wonder of my face.
For paradises brimming with delight
I would not lay one shadow weight of shame
On her you name.

Bardas. A pretty protest—but
A breath too heavenly.

Antonio. Then hear me say
You have repaid yourself—cast on me words
Less to be borne than treble loss of life.
And know, that between Helena and shame
I stand with flaming heart and fearless hand.

[*Strides angrily off, leaving them.*

Hæmon. And is he false? wearing this mien of truth?

Bardas. I'll not believe him!

Hæmon. Helena was *seized?*

Bardas. For him who stands "with flaming heart" between!
Have we no flesh to understand this passion?
Will he, bound to the wings of bold ambition,
Choose her undowered worth?
Into suspicion's fire I would not cast
The fairness of his name; but doubts in me
Are dumb with proof.

Hæmon. Full?

Bardas. And unfalterable.

Hæmon. He could not! he would dare not.

Bardas. Yet the rogue
Cecco, the duke's half-seneschal, half-spy,
I passed upon the streets as I came here,
O'ermuch in wine, and to a jade spouting
With drunken mockery,
' "Sweet Helena! Fair Helena!'—O wench,
My eyes, but the Lord Antonio knows sound nuts!
And sly! why, hear you now! he gets the duke—
The duke to seize the maid! The fox! the rat!
And hear now! have I not—not heard him—nights—
Within his chamber, at his window, puffing
Her name with drawls—as many honeyed drawls
Of passion—as—as—as—as June has buds!
'Sweet Helena! fair Helena!' he says.
'My rose! my queen!—My sun and moon and stars!
Thy lips, my Helena! thy arms! thy breast!'
Um, oh! a rare damsel! . . . I'll make ways
Between her purse and mine, wench; do you hear?"

Hæmon. Well—well?

Bardas. No more. When I had struck him down
He swore it was unswerving all and truth.
Hasting to warn I found Helena gone—
And sought you here.

Hæmon (*groaning*). Ah!

Bardas. Helena, who is
All purity!

Hæmon. And all. . . . Ah, sister, child!
[*Choking.*
Have I been father, and with tenderness
A mother been, to thy unfolding years
But to see now unchastest cruelty
Pluck the white bloom to ease his idle sense
One fragrant hour?—If it is so, no flowers
Should blossom, only weeds whose withering
Can hurt no heart.

Bardas. And tears like these should seal
Fierce oaths against him.

Hæmon. Fiercest! And they shall!
God wreck him in the tempest he has raised!

Bardas. And may I be the rock on which he breaks

[*Shouts and laughter are heard approaching.*

But who? . . . who comes? (*Looks off.*) Revellers.—Let us step
Within this breach until their mirth is past.

[*They conceal themselves in the stones. The revellers enter, as bacchanals, dancing and singing:*

Bacchus, hey! was a god, hei-yo!
The vine! a fig for the rest!
With locks green-crowned and lips red-warm—
The vine! the vine's the best!

He loved maids, O-o-ay! hei-yo!
The vine! a maiden's breast!
He pressed the grape, and kissed the maid—
The cuckoo builds no nest!

[*All go dancing, except* Lydia *and* Phaon, *who clasps and kisses her passionately.*

Lydia (*breaking from him*). Do you think kisses are so cheap? You must know mine fill my purse! A pretty gallant from Naples, with laces and silks and jewels, gave me this ring last year for but one. And another lover from Venice gave me this (*a bracelet*)—but he looked so sad when he gave it! Ah, his eyes! I'd not have cared if he had given me naught.

Phaon. Here, here, then! [*Offers jewel.*

Lydia (*putting it aside*). They say the ladies in Venice ride with their lovers through the streets all night in boats; and the very moon shines more passionately there. Is it true?

Phaon. Yes, yes. But kiss me, Lydia! Take the jewel—my last. But be mine to-night, no other's! We'll prate of Venice another time.

Lydia. Another time we'll prate of kisses. I'll not have the jewel!

Phaon. Not have it! Now you're turning nun! a soft and virgin, silly nun! With a gray gown to hide these shoulders, that—shall I whisper it?

Lydia. Devil! they're not! A nice lover called them round and fair last night. And I've been sick! And—I—cruel! cruel! cruel!

[*Revellers are heard returning.*

There, they're coming.

Phaon. Never mind, my girl. But you mustn't scorn a man's blood when it's afire.

[*Re-enter Revellers singing:*

Bacchus, hey! was a god, hei-yo! etc.

[*After which all go except* Zoe *and* Basil.

Zoe. O! O! O! but 'tis brave! Wine, Basil! Wine, my knight, my Bacchus! Ho! ho! my god! you wheeze like a cross-bow. Is it years, my wooer, years? Ah!

[*She sighs.*

Basil. Sighs—sighs! Now look for showers.

Zoe. Basil—you were my first lover—except the Duke Charles. Ah, did you see how that Helena looked when they gave her the duke's command? I was like that once.

[Hæmon *starts forward.*

Basil. Fiends, nymphs, and saints! it's come! tears in her eyes! Zoe, stop it! Would you have mine leak and drive me to a monastery for shelter?

Zoe (*sings sadly and absently*):

She lay by the river, dead,
A broken reed in her hand—
A nymph whom an idle god had wed
And led from her maiden land.

Basil. Oh, had I been born a heathen!

Zoe. He told me, Basil, I should live, a great lady, at his castle. And they should kiss my hand and curtsey to me. He meant but jest—I feared—I feared! But—I loved him!

Basil. Now, my damsel—!

Zoe (*sings*):

The god was the great god, Jove.
Two notes would the bent reed blow:
The one was sorrow, the other love—
Enwove with a woman's woe.

Basil. Songs and snakes! Give me instead a Dominican's funeral! I'd as lief crawl bare-kneed to Rome and mouth the Pope's heel. O blessed Turks with their remorseless harems!—Zoe!

Zoe (*sings*):

She lay by the river, dead:
And he at feasting forgot.
The gods, shall they be disquieted
By dread of a mortal's lot?

[*She wipes her eyes, trembles, looks at him and laughs hysterically.*

Bacchus! my Bacchus! with wet eyes! Up, up, lad! there's many a cup for us yet!

[*They go, she leading and singing.*

He loved maids, O-o-ay! hei-yo!
The vine! a maiden's breast! etc.

[HÆMON *and* BARDAS *look at each other, then start after them, terribly moved.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE: *An audience hall in the castle of* CHARLES DI TOCCA, *the next afternoon. The dark stained walls have been festooned with vines and flowers. On the left is the ducal throne. On the right, sunlight through high-set windows. In the rear heavily draped doors. A wine table with wines. Enter* CHARLES, *who looks around and smiles with subtle content, then summons* CECCO, *who enters.*

Charles. The princess Fulvia.

Cecco. She comes, sir, now.

[*Goes. Enter* FULVIA, *strainedly.*

Fulvia. My lord, flowers and vines upon these walls,
That seem always to bear the memory

And mist of grief? What means it?

Charles. A grave thing
They sprung, a greedy multitude, in the fields.
Citron and olive by them were left hungry,
So by the might that's in me they are quelled.
[*Smiles.*
Is it not well?

Fulvia. A magic dwells in flowers
To waft me back to childhood. (*Takes some.*) Poor pluckt buds,
If they could speak, like children torn from the breast.

Charles. Now, are you full of sighs and pity?

Fulvia. Yes;
Of pity and—of doubt.

Charles. And what divides you?

Fulvia. This Greek—I do not understand.

Charles. Nor guess?
You have not seen nor spoken to her?

Fulvia. No.

Charles. We'll have her. Cecco! (*Enter*

CECCO.) Say that we wait her here,
The lady Helena. [CECCO *goes, bowing.*
But you must know she's frightened, Fulvia.
Fearing her father found too deep a rest
Here in our care. Yet she has hope that holds
The tears still from her lids—for I've smiled on her—
Smiled as I passed—and she— Why do you cloud?

Fulvia. I would this were undone.

Antonio. Undone? Undone?
This that I crave?

Fulvia. Yes.

[*Enter* HELENA.

Charles. Greek—our Fulvia,
Who is as heart and health about our doors,
Has speech for you. And as I've business—

Fulvia. Go, go, my lord.

Charles (*going*). You will be brief?

Fulvia. As may be.

[*Then alone with the girl, and moved.*

Girl, child—

Helena. Why do you look upon me so?

Fulvia. You're very fair.

Helena. And was so free I thought
The world brimmed up with my full happiness.

Fulvia. But find it is a sieve to all save grief?

Helena. If it is grief—and not a graver thing!
For I am girt by emptiness that aches,
Surrounds and whispers what I dare not think,
Or see shaped forth!

Fulvia. Upon the morrow's face?

Helena. You look at me—I think you look at me—
As if—?

Fulvia. No, child.

Helena. Why am I in this place?
Why bidden here?—You fear for me!

Fulvia. Fear?

Helena. Yes!
A dumb dread trembles from you sufferingly.

Fulvia. It is not fear—or, no!—has vanished quite,
Ashamed of its too naked idleness.

Helena. He cannot! will not!—Yet you feared!

Fulvia. Be calm.

Beauty is better so.

Helena. And best unborn.

For you can see great shadow reach at me,

Yet lend no light!—By gentleness I pray you

What said he?

Fulvia. Child—

Helena. Ah what! A moment's dread

Brings age on us!—If not by gentleness,

Then by the love that women bear to men,

By happiness too fleeting to tread earth,

I pray you tell the fear your heart so hides!

Fulvia. You are the guest of Charles di Tocca.

Helena. None!

For guests are bidden not commanded.—Where,

Where can Antonio be gone! All day

No token, quieting!

Fulvia (*quickly*). Antonio, girl?

[*Re-enter* CHARLES.

Antonio? is it true? . . .

Charles (*as they see him*). Truth, Fulvia—
Has brewed more tears than lies. But why now does
It mated with Antonio's mere name
Prey so upon your peace?

Fulvia. My lord——

Charles. You falter?
No matter, now. (*To* HELENA.) But you, my fair one, put
More merriment upon your lips and lids.
And this— (*gives pearls*) upon the luster of your throat.
Hither our guests come soon. Be with us then,
And at your beauty's best. Now; trembling so?

[*As she goes.*

Yet is the lily lovelier in the wind!

[*Is looking after her, musing.*

FULVIA *waits.*

Fulvia (*at length*). My lord——

Charles. Aih, Fulvia, as titles go.

Fulvia. My lord——

Charles. Twice—but I'm not two lords.

Fulvia. To-night

I think you are. But quench these jests.

Charles. In tears?

And groans? Where borrow them?

Fulvia (*turning away*). So let it be.

Charles. Why do you say so let it?—and as if
Naught could again be well?

Fulvia. Ah!

Charles. Now you frown?

Fulvia. This hope you nurse, then, if it prove
a pang
Of serpent bitterness.

Charles. To whom and why?
I for an "if"—but that!—must pluck it from me?

Fulvia. So I believe.

Charles. Pluck, pluck it from me! . . . Will
you,
Now will you have me mouth and foam and thresh
This quiet in me to a maelstrom?—This
Is mine, this joy, and still is mine—though I

To keep it must bring on me bitterness
And bleeding and . . . . I rage!
Fulvia. That I may cease?
And say no more?—No, you are on a flood
Whose sinking may be rapid down to horror.
And she—this girl! It has been long since you
Gave licence rein upon your will, and spur.
Do not so now.
Charles. Licence?
Fulvia. She is all morn
And dream and dew. Make her not night!
Charles. You think—!
Fulvia. Wake her not, ah, not suddenly on terror!
Charles (*laughing*). O-ho!
Fulvia. You have laughed nobler.
Charles (*ceasing*). Upon terror?
Friend of my unrepaying years, do you,
Who know that I in empire youth forgot,
Not know as well how now the presage-dew
Of nearing age upon my brow can shake me?

Fulvia. I—did not, but have waited oft such words.

Charles. Ah, what! This hope, this leaping in me, this

White dawn across my turbulence and night,
From licence? . . . Hear me: I have sudden found
A door to let in Heaven on my heart.
Had I not laughed to see your dread write on it,
"Licence" . . . perilous had been my frown.

Fulvia. Then you—?

Charles. Yes! yes! About her brow shall curl
The coronet! Her wishes shall be sceptres
Waving a swift fulfillment to her feet!
Her pity shall leave ready graves unfilled,
Her anger open earth for all who offend!
She shall——

Fulvia. Ah, cease, infatuate man. Will you
Build kingdoms on the wind, and empires on
A girl's ungiven heart?

Charles (*slowly*). Unto such love
As mine all things are given.

Fulvia. All things but love.

Charles. Then . . . then . . . what meant her pleading—as unto
Her cheeks came hurried roses from her heart?
And her large eyes, did they not drift to mine
Caressing?—yet as if in them they found
The likeness of some visitant dear dream?

Fulvia. The likeness of some *dream?*

Charles. Question no more.
She is set in the centre of my need
As youth and fiercest passion could not set her.
Supernally as May she has burst on
My barren age. Pain, envious decay,
And doubt that mystery wounds us with, and wrong,
Flee from the gleam and whisper of her name.

Fulvia. And if your coronet and heat avail
Not with her as might charm of equal years—
And beauty?

Charles. Then, why then—why—there may slip
An avalanche of raging —and despair—
Out of me! Hope of her once taken, all

The thwarted thirsting of my want would rush
Into the void, with lightnings for revenge!

[*Enter* ANTONIO.

With lightnings! . . . lightnings! . . .

Antonio (*bowing*). Sir; I am returned.

Charles. Boy—you? My eyes had other thought
—and blacker.

Open your news; but mind 'tis not of failure.

Antonio. We seized the murderous robbers as
you bade,

And o'er the cliff, as our just law commands,
To death flung them.

Charles. So with all traitors be it.

Antonio. So should it.

Charles. Well, 'twas swift. In you
there is

More than your mother's gentleness.

Antonio. Else were
My name di Tocca, sir, and not myself.

Charles. You have my love.—But as you came
met you

The Cardinal?

Antonio. So close, he should by this
Be at our gates.

Charles. He'll miss no welcome. And—
Perhaps—we shall—(*smiles on them*). Give me
that cross you wear,
My Fulvia; it may——

Antonio. Sir, this is good!
We earnestly beseech of you to hear
The Pope's ambassador with yielding.

Charles. Ah?
Then you, boy, draw out of this solitude
You late are sunken in. You should think but
On silly sighs and kisses, rhymes and trysts.
Must I yet teach your coldness youth?
[*Stir at the gates.*
Draw out!

Antonio. I have desired some words of this to-day.

Enter Cecco.

Charles. Well, fellow, who—?

Cecco. The Cardinal, your Grace.

Charles. Then bid our guests. And bring Diogenes,
Our most amusing raveller of all
Philosophies. Say that the duke, his brother,
Humbly desires it. And stay, in her chamber
Is—lady Helena.

Antonio (*starting*). My lord!

Charles. Well, what, boy?

[*When* CECCO *is gone, to* FULVIA.

Do you perceive him there, my Fulvia,
We must look to this callow god, my son,
For had our court two eyes to drown his heart,
I'd give good oath—a goodly, it were done.

[*Goes to throne.*

Fulvia (*to* ANTONIO). You heard? No word of Helena!

Charles. Now, secrets?

Fulvia. He scorns me, sir, a drop of confidence
On my too thirsty questions.

Charles. Does he so
Tightly seal up his spirits?

Fulvia. Put the rogue
To prison on stale bread, my lord. I half
Believe he's full of treasons!

Charles (*laughing*). And may spill?
You hear, sir? Though you are a son and loved,
Justice is not impossible upon you.

[*The guests enter, among them* HÆMON *and* BARDAS, *who follow the* CARDINAL JULIAN *and his suite; then, last,* HELENA, *whom* FULVIA *leads aside.*

Julian. Peace, worthy duke!

Charles. And more, lord Cardinal.
I would to-day enlarge my worthiness
With you and with great Rome.

Julian (*bows*). Whose cause I bear,
And hope in. [*Sits.*

Charles. Then, here unto all our guests,
I humbly disavow my heresies—

For faith's as air, as ease to life—and seek
At your absolving lips release from all
Rough disobedience. Nor shall I shun
The lash and needed weight of penitence.

[*A murmur of approval.*

Julian. These words, great lord, fall wise and soothing well.
Who so confesses plants beneath his foot
A step to scale all impotence and wrong.
Our royal Pope's conditions shall be read,

[*Motions* SECRETARY, *who advances.*

Pledge them consenting seal and you shall be
Briefly and fully free.

Charles (*to* SECRETARY). We'll hope. Begin.

Secretary (*opening and reading*):

"Whereas the Duke di Tocca, of these isles
And Arta, has offended"——

Julian. Pass the offence.
Be it oblivion's. The penalty.

Secretary. "Therefore the Duke di Tocca, humbling himself

Must pay into our vaults two hundred ducats"——

Charles. It shall be three.

Secretary. "And send an hundred men

Armed, at the foes that threaten Italy."

Charles. We will, Antonio, and ere the dawn.

Secretary. "He must also yield up the princess Fulvia,

Who fled her father's house and rightful marriage."

[*All start, and look at* CHARLES.

Fulvia (*to* JULIAN). You told me not of this—no word, my lord!

Julian. My silence, as my speech, is not my own.

Charles. Ha?—We will hear a measure more. Read on.

Secretary. "And for the better amity and weal

Of Italy and Christ's Most Holy Church,

He is enjoined to wed with Beatrice—

[*Commotion.*

Of Florence. And if boldly thus he grants

Obedience, his sins shall melt to rest—
Under the healing calm of full forgiveness."

Charles. A mild . . . a courteous, Oh, a modest
Pope!
I must tear from my happiness a friend
Who fled a father's searing cruelty,
And cast her back in the flames. And I must bind
My crippled years that fare toward the grave
In the cold clasp of an unloving hand.
. . . . No! . . .
So, sir and Cardinal, 'tis not enough.
I pray you swift again to Rome and plead
Most suppliantly that I for penance may
Swear my true son is shame-begot; or lend
My kin to drink, clean of its fouling damp,
Some pestilent prison! And 'tis impious, too,
That any still should trust my love. Beseech
His Holiness' command for death upon them!

Julian. This is your answer?

Charles (*rises*). A mite! a mite of it!
The rest is, I will wed where I will wed

Though every hill of earth raise up its pope
To bellow at me infamous damnation!

[*Is convulsed.*

I—I—will—I—

Fulvia. Charles! ah! wine for him—wine!

[*Runs to him.*

Antonio. Lord Cardinal, spare yourself more and go.

[*Brings wine.* . . . JULIAN *goes.*

Charles. I—I will—I—! (*falls back*). Off, off my throat! (*recovering*). He's gone?
You, Fulvia? . . . it seemed a fiend swung on me.
A fiend of wrath who would have driven me . . .
But no . . . (*To the guests, calmer.*) Forgive, friends, this so sudden wrench
Upon your pleasure. One too quick made saint
Stands feebly. And I will atone at once.
Where is Diogenes—where is he? . . . Ay!
His tangled skein of wisdom shall divert us.

[DIOGENES, *who has stood heedless of all, is pushed forward.*

Ah, peer of Socrates and perfect Plato,
Leave your unseeing silence now and tell us——

[*Enter* AGABUS.

Who's this?

Agabus (*gazing*). Where went he—the Shadow? whither? the Shadow?

Charles. Who's this broke from his grave upon us?

Agabus (*searching still*). Whither?
I followed him—he sped and there was cold!
Behind him blows a horror! (*Suddenly.*) Ah, upon her!

[*Stops awed before Helena.*

His touch! . . . his earthless finger! . . . and she rots!

Antonio. Vile monk!

Agabus. To dust! to dust!

Antonio (*seizing him*). Are there no men,
That you must wring a woman so with fear?

Agabus. Ha, men? Christ save all men but lovers! all!

[*Crosses himself.*

Charles. Antonio, what speaks he?

Antonio. Sir, he's mad
With a pestilence of evil prophecy.

[*To guards.*

Forth with him.

Charles. Stay. I'll hear him for myself.

[*To* AGABUS.

Come hither, friend. So. Now, why do you gaze?

Agabus (*who has gone to* CHARLES *and stares with suppressed excitement*).

A lover! a lover! and he loves in vain.
Come, go. There is a cave—(*takes his hand*).
We'll curse her—come!

Charles. Out! out!

[*Strikes him.*

Agabus. Christ save all men but . . .
Ah, the Shadow!

[*Seeks vacantly.*

Has no one seen him? none?—the Shadow? none?

[*Goes, dazed. The guests whisper, awed.*
A moment's silence.

Charles. He is obsessed—vile utterly!

A Guest. Sir, yes.
But I must go.

Another. And I, my lord.

A Third. And I.

Charles. Friends, no, you shall not—no. This pall will pass.
My hospitality is up; you shall not.

A Lady. Nor we, O duke?

Charles. Nor you. A grudging wind
Blows us away from mirth, but 'tis in view.
We've lute and dance that yet shall bring us in.

2d Lady. Oh, dance!

Charles. Cecco, our Circes from the Nile.

[Cecco *goes.*

3d Lady. The Nile? ah, Cleopatra's Nile?

Charles. Her own.

And sinuous as Nile water is their grace!

[*Enter two Egyptian girls, who dance, then go.*

Guests (*applauding*). O bravely! brave!

Charles. Do they not whirl it well?
With limbs like swallow wings upon the blue!

1st Lady. 'Twas witchery!

2d Lady. Such eyes! such hair!

3d Lady. And thus,
Did Cleopatra thus steal Antony!
Wrap him about with motions that would seize
His senses with an ecstasy! Oh, oh!
To dance so!

Charles. And so steal an Antony?
We'll frame a law on thieving of men's hearts!

2d Lady. Then, vainly!—'tis a theft men like the most.

Charles. When in its stead the thief has left her own.
But shall we woo no boon of mirth save dance?
A lute! a lute! (*One is sought.*) Some new lay.
Hæmon, come!

But every word must dip its syllables
In Pindar's spring, to trip so lightly forth.

Hæmon. I have no lay.

Charles. The lute! (*It is offered.*)
Sing us of love—
That builds a Paradise of kisses, thinks
The Infinite bound up in an embrace.
Of love! whose sighs are hurricanes of pain,
Whose tears are seas of molten misery.

Hæmon. I have none—cannot.

Charles. Now, will you fright off
Again our timid cheer?

Hæmon. While she, my sister—!
[*Refuses.*
I cannot! will not.

Charles. Will not? will not? . . . Look!
I had an honor pluckt to laurel it,
A wreath of noble worth, a thing to tell—

Hæmon. Honor upon dishonor sits not well.

Charles (*not hearing*). Heat me not with denial.
Is new bliss

Raised from the dead in me but to fall back
As stone ere it has breathed? . . . Now is it, is
it?
Be slow, I say, to tempt me. In me moves
Peril that has a passion to leap forth.
Hæmon. Antonio! speak then! where is inno-
cence?
And where deceit?
Fulvia (*low to him*). Ask it not, or you step
On waiting hazard and calamity.
Charles. New fret? . . . and new confusion?
In the blind
Power and passing of this light is there
Conspiracy!—plot of some here? or of
That One whose necromancy wields the world?
I care not!—I care not! We must have mirth!
Have mirth! though it be laughter at damned souls.
Hæmon. And I must wake it? I, with laugh and
lay
Doting upon dishonor?
Charles. What means he?

Hæmon. Give me again my sister from these walls.

Since might is yours, strip from me wealth and life
And more and all!—but let her not, no, no,
Meet here the touch and leprosy of shame!

Charles (*laughing*). Said I not friends, my friends, we should have mirth?

You shall laugh with me laughter bright as wine.

Antonio. But, sir, this is not good for laughter —sir!

Hæmon (*to* ANTONIO). Ah, put the lamb on—bleat mock sympathy!

Charles (*still laughing*). Fulvia, oh, he foots it in the tracks

Of your own fear, and wanders to delusion!

Hæmon. Will you laugh at me, fiend!

Charles. Boy?

Hæmon. Had I but

Omnipotence a moment and could dash
Annihilation on you and your race!

[*Strikes* ANTONIO.

Helena. Hæmon!

Fulvia. Helena, back!

Charles. Omnipotence?

And could Omnipotence make such a fool?

There must be two gods in the world to do it.

Hæmon. She shall not—!

[*Attempts to kill* HELENA.

Antonio (*preventing it*). Fury! Fury! . . . What would you do?

Charles. Can such things be? A sister, yet he strikes?

[HÆMON *is seized.*

Helena. Oh, let me speak to him, sir, let me speak!

Charles. Not now, girl, no, not now—lest in his breath

Be venom for thee! (*To the guard.*) Shut him without our gates

Till he repent this fever. (*To the guests, who shrink.*) If you stare so

Will the skies stop! Have I not arm in arm

Friended this youth—and meant him honor still?

[HÆMON *is led out.*

Leave me. I had a thing to tell, but it
Must wait more seasonable festivity.
(*To* PAULA.) See to your mistress, child. Antonio,
stay.

[*All go but* ANTONIO *and* CHARLES, *who leaves the throne slowly.*

Antonio. Father——

Charles (*unheeding*). Did I not humble me?

Antonio. Sir—?

Charles. Did
I ask more than a brevity of joy
To bud on my life's withering close?

Antonio (*anxiously*). Sir, sir!

Charles. If it bud not—!

Antonio. What thought is it that wrings
These angers from your lips?

Charles (*slowly, gazing at him*). You're like
your mother.

Antonio. In trouble for your peace, more than in feature.

Charles. Peace—peace? Antonio, a dream has come.

To stir—to wake—to learn it is a dream—
I must not, will not look on such abyss.
You love me, boy?

Antonio. Sir, well; you cannot doubt it.

Charles. There has been darkness in me—and it seems
Such night as would put out a heaven of hopes,
Quench an eternity of flaming joy.
I have sunk down under the world and hit
On nethermost despair, flown blind across
An infinite unrest!

Antonio. Forget it now.

Charles. Had I drunk Lethe's all, 'twould not have stilled
The crying of my desolation's want.
Within me tenderness to iron turned,
Gladness to worm and gloom. But 'tis o'erpast.

A rift, a smile, a breath has come—blown me
From torture to an ecstasy!

Antonio. Sir?

Charles. To
Such ecstasy as sways Hyperion's sun,
Or Pleiads sweeping seven-fold the night.

Antonio. And this breath—is?

[*Chokes.*

Charles. How! . . . You are pale and press
Your lips from trembling.

Antonio. No—yes—well—This breath?
This ecstasy?

Charles. Is love! a love for . . . ! But—
You feign! distress and groaning do tear in you!

Antonio. No. She you love—?

Charles. O Eve new-burst on Eden,
All pure with the prime beauty of God's breath,
Was not so!

Antonio. She is Helena?—the Greek?

Charles. Helena! whom you've seen! Who—
But you are

Not well and cannot share this ravishment.
I will not ask it now.
This ravishment!—Ah, she has stayed the tread
And stilled the whispering of death; has called
Echoes of youth from me, and all I feared. . . .
I think you are not well. Shall we go in?
[*Takes his arm. They turn.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE: *The gardens of the castle. Paths meet under a large lime-tree in the centre, where seats are placed. The wall of the garden crosses the rear, and has a postern. It is night of the same day, and behind a convent on a near hill the moon is rising. A nightingale sings.*

Enter GUILIA, CECCO, *and* NALDO.

Guilia. That bird! Always so noisy, always vain
Of gushing. Sing, and sing, sing, sing, it must!
As if nobody else would speak or sleep.

Cecco. Let the bird be, my jaunty. A tale tells
That nightingale and shrew were never friends.

Guilia. No more were shrew and serpent.

Cecco. Well, what would
You scratch from me?

Guilia. If there is anything
To be got from you, then it must be scratched.

Cecco. Yet—shrews do not scratch serpents.

Guilia. When they're caught
Where they can neither coil nor strike?

Cecco. Well, I
Begin to coil.

Guilia. And I'll begin to scotch you
Ere it is done.—Give me the postern key.

Cecco. Your lady's voice—but you are not your lady.

Guilia. And were I, you not long would be your lord's.
Give me the key.

Cecco. I coil! I coil!

Guilia. And soon
You will be ready for a strike? Pah, then—!
Does the duke know you've hidden from his ear
Antonio's passion? (Cecco *starts.*) Does he?—
Ah! and shall
I tell him?—ah?

Cecco. You know it?

Guilia. He likes well

What's kept so thriftily.

Cecco (*scowling*). You want the key

To let in Boro to chuck your baby face

And moon with you! He's been discharged—take care!

Guilia. The duke might learn, too, you're not clear between

His ducats and your own.

Cecco. There, then (*gives key*). But—

Guilia. Oh?

And shrews do not scratch serpents?—You may spy

But others are not witless I can tell you!

[Cecco *goes.*

Now, Naldo—(*hands him key and writing*) do not lose the letter. But

Should you, he must not come till two. For 'tis

At twelve the Greek will meet Antonio.

[Naldo *goes through the postern;* Guilia *to the castle.*

Enter HELENA *and* PAULA *from another part of the gardens.*

Helena. At twelve, said he, at twelve, beside the arbor?

Paula. Yes, mistress.

Helena. I were patient if the moon
Would slip less sadly up. She is so pale—
With longing for Endymion, her lover.

Paula. Has she a lover? Oh, how strange! Is it
So sweet to love, my lady?—I have heard
Men die and women for it weep themselves
Into the grave—yet gladly.

Helena. Sweet? Ah, yes,
To terror! for the edge of fate cares not
How quick it severs. . . .

Paula. On my simple hills
They told of one who slew herself on her
Dead lover's breast. Would you do so?
Would you, my lady?

Helena. There's no twain in love.
My heart is in my lord Antonio's
To beat, Paula, or cease with it.
Paula. Though he
Died far away?
Helena. Far sunders flesh not souls.
Across all lands the hush of death on him
Would sound to me; and, did he live, denial,
Though every voice compassionless should speak it
I should not hear. But he is near!
Paula. Oh, no,
Not yet, my lady.
Helena. Then some weariness
Has pluckt the minutes' wings and they have crept.
Paula. It is not twelve—else would we hear the band
Of holy Basil from their convent chant.
Helena. Nay; hearts may hear beyond the hark of ears.
His step thrills thro' the earth—into my breast!

[*The postern opens.*

'Tis he! go, Paula, go. But sleep not.

Paula. No.

[*Goes.* ANTONIO *enters.*

Helena. Ah, my Antonio, I breathe again
Now that I know betiding has not fallen
To stay thee from me.

Antonio. Stronger than all betiding
This hour has reached and drawn me yearning to thee! [*Takes her in his arms.*

Helena. So may all hours!

Antonio. All! . . . though we two will still
Be more than destiny—which cannot grasp
Beyond the grave.

Helena. 'Tis sadly put, my lord.

Antonio. Sadly—and loathly! But, my Helena——

Helena. I would not sink from it, the happy sun,
Fade to a tomb! . . .
What dirging hast thou heard to mind thee of it?

Antonio. Love is a bliss too bright to dwell on earth.
With it God should give us ever to soar
Above mortality.

Helena. And above—fear?—
But no! tell me not yet! dimly I see
The burden in your eyes, but dare not yet
Take it into my own. Let us a little
Look on the moon forgetting—the pale moon!

[*They sit.*

Antonio (*musingly*). These hands—these—and this hair—!

Helena. Like a farewell
Your touch falls on them.

Antonio (*moved*). To a father yield them?

Helena. Antonio?

Antonio. No, no! it cannot be,

Helena. This dread, then, and this shrinking—let me have it!
You mean—look on me—mean your father—?

Antonio. Ah!
It must not!

Helena. But you mean—you mean he—No!
Let him not touch me even in thy thought,
To me come nearer than a father may!

Antonio. He's swept by the sweet contagion of you, wrapt
In a fierce spell by your effulgent youth.

Helena. Say, say it not! To him I but smiled up—
But smiled!

Antonio. And he knew not such smiles could dawn
In a bare world! And now is flame, would take
Your tenderness into his arms and hear,
Seized to him, the warm music of your heart.
Oh, I could be for him—he is my father—
Prometheus stormed and gnawed on Caucasus,
Tantalus ever near the slipping wave,
Or torn and tossed to burning martyrdom—
But not—not this!

Helena. Then, flight! In it we may
Find haven and new nurture for our bliss.

Antonio. And from his hunger snap this hope, so he
Must starve? Push him who has but learned there's light
Back into yawning blindness?—No!

Helena. Then what?—
I know he is your father, and my days
Have been all fatherless, though I have made
Me child to every wind that had caress
And to each lonely tree of the deep wood—
Oft envious of those who touch gray hairs,
Or spend desire on filial grief and pang.
I know, too, you have kept a softness in him,
Been to him more than empire's tyranny—
But baffled none can measure him, or trust.

Antonio. Yet we must wait.

Helena. When waiting shall but goad
The speed of peril?

Antonio. Still; and strain to win
Him from this brink. If vainly, then birth, pity
And memory shall fall from me! all, all,
But fierceness for thy peace!

Helena. My Antony!

Antonio. A fierceness without falter!

Helena (in his arms). I am thine!
Thine more than immortality is God's!
Hear, does the nightingale not tell it thee?
The stars, do they not tremble it? the moon
Murmur it mystically into thine eyes?

Antonio. Ah, sorceress! You need but breathe to put
Abysm from us; but build words to float us
On infinite ecstasy.

Helena. The where thy kisses
Sing in me!

Antonio. They but send thee from my heart
Echoes born of thy beauty mid its strings.

Helena. Then would I lean forever at thy lips,
Lose no reverberance, no ring, no waft,

Hear nothing everlastingly but them.

[*A mournful chant is borne from the convent. . . . They unclasp and listen, awed.*

Antonio. Weary with vigil does it swell and sink,
Moaning the dead.

Helena. Ah, no! there are no dead
To-night in all the world. Could God see them
Lie cold and wondrous still, while we are rich
In warmth and throb?

Antonio. Yet, hear. The funeral tread
Of the old sea sighs in each strain and breaks.

Helena. As I were drowned and heard it over me,
It cometh! . . . As . . . as if I were drowned.

[*Her head droops back on his arm.*

Antonio (*starting and touching her face*).
Helena! You are cold! . . . your lips! your brow!
And pale . . . pale as with a prophecy.

Helena. Oh—oh!—

Antonio. Your spirit . . . is not in you—but
Afar and suffering! . . .

Helena. A vision sweeps me.

Antonio. Awake from it!

Helena (*recovering*). A waste of waves that beat
Upon a cliff and beat. Yet thou and I
Had place in it.

Antonio. Come to yon arbor, come.
The moon has looked too long on the sad earth,
And can reflect but sorrow.

Helena. Oh! I fear!

[*They go, clinging passionately together.*

Enter CHARLES *and* CECCO.

Charles. And yet it is a little thing to sleep—
Just to lie down and sleep. A child may do it.

Cccco. If my lord would, here's sleep for him
wrapped in
A quiet powder.

Charles. Sleep is the mate of peace
And ever should go with it. I have slept

In the wild arms of battle when the winds
Of souls departing fearfully shook by,
Or on the breast of dizzy danger cradled
Have soft been lulled. Potions should be for them
Who wrestle and are thrown by misery.

Cecco. And is my lord at peace?

Charles. Strangely. Yet seem
For sleep too coldly calm.

Cecco. So were you, sir—
I keep your words lest you may need of them—
On the same night young Hæmon's father found
A secret way—to death!

Charles (*darkly*). Which . . . you dare
name me?

Cecco. Pardon, I but—

Charles. Smirker!—Yet was it so?
That night indeed

Cecco. Sir, surely.

Charles. And the moon
Hung in the east, stainless, even as now?

Cecco. Sir, half, even as now.

Charles (*as to himself*). Since that hour's close
To this I have not stood in so much calm.
Still, was he not in every vein of him,
And breath, a traitor? A Greek who,—I'll not say it.
Since she is Greek I must forget the word
Is diapason to all perfidy.

Cecco. My lord thinks of the lady Helena?

Charles. And if I do?

Cecco. Why, sir——

Charles. Well?

Cecco. Nothing. But——

Charles. Subtle! your nothing bulges with some theft
Of spial.

Cecco. Sir—I—no—that is—

Charles. That is—
It does! . . . Must I persuade it from your throat?

[*Threatens to choke him.*

Cecco. It was of Lord—Antonio—

Charles. Speak, then.

Cecco. Have you not marked him sundry of his moods?

Charles. Well?

Cecco. On his back in the woods, as if the leaves
Sung fairy balladry; then riding wild
Nowhither and alone; about the castle
Yearning, yet absent to soft speech and arms!—
He'll drink, sir, and not know if it be wine!

Charles. So is he; yet this morning he unsheathed
His skill and bravery.

Cecco. And did not crave
A boon of you?

Charles. None. But you put my thought
Not ill to it. His aspiration flags.

Cecco. Ah, flags?

Charles. New wings it needs and buoyancy.
My trust in him is ripe. For fruit of it,
He shall be lord of Arta—total lord.

Cecco. He begged no softer boon?

Charles. Cunning! again?
Sleek questions of a sleeker consequence?

Cecco. It was, sir, only of Antonio——

Charles. Worm, you began so. Stretch now to the end,
Or—will you?

Cecco. I would say—would ask—and hope
There is no thorny hint in it to vex you,
May he not be—— (*low*)
Amorous, mellow-sick, upon some maid?

Charles. Have you so labored to this atom's birth?
Is a boy's passion so new under the moon
You gape at it?

Cecco. But if, sir——

Charles. I had thought
Woe was your ending—some Titanic woe
No human catapult could war upon!
Some dread colossal doom frenzied to fall!
And had it been he's traitor to my throne,
Or ready with some potent cruelty

To blight this tenderness new-sprung in me,
I should—even have listened!

[*Starts.*

But . . . a step?

[*The postern is softly opened—to admit* HÆMON.

Charles (*confounded—as* HÆMON *stops, pale*).
Keys? you?—to this? Keys! and a guilty stealth?

Hæmon. I have excuse.

Charles. A-hoh!—And to my gems
And secrecies, a better? Shall I not
Reveal their hiding? rubies and fair gold?

[CECCO *steals off.*

Hæmon. Mistake me not, my lord.

Charles. I could not, sir!
You come at midnight—a most honest hour!
Enter this postern—a most honest way!
And seem most honest! Then . . . how could I, sir?

Hæmon. You wrong me and have wronged me.
I but come
To loose my sister.
Charles. As to-day you would?
With an imperious piercing, into death?
Hæmon. Rather, Antonio, could I! Yet now,
neither.
Since you, not he, are here, my passion melts
Into a plea. Humbly as manhood may——
Charles. This fever still?
Hæmon. This fever! Must I be
As ice while soiling flames leap out at her?
Be passionless—as one cold in a trance?
Rigid, while she in stealth is drugged to shame?
Be voiceless, and be vain, unstung, and still?
I must wait softly while her innocence
Is drained as virgin freshness from the morn?
Tho' he were twice Antonio and your son,
An emperor and a god, I would not! . . .
Charles (*staring*). Ever,
And ever bent upon Antonio?—

Be not a torrent, boy, of rush and foam.
Be not; ha, no. Yet—look: Antonio?
You said Antonio?

Hæmon. Yes.

Charles (*troubled*). Then you did ill
To say it! He is my son.

Hæmon. I care not.

Charles. Have
You cause—a ground—some reason? Men should when
Suspicions curve their lips.

Hæmon. Ah, reason!

Charles. No
He is my son. His flesh has memories
That would cry out and curdle him to madness.
Palsy and strangle every pregnant wish,
Or bring in him compassion like a flood.

Hæmon (*contemptuously*). Oh—?

Charles. Then—what reason? What?...

[*A voice is heard off.*

The Voice. My lord! my lady!

[*They start.* PAULA *enters hurriedly.*

Paula. My lord Antonio! my lady! (*seeing* CHARLES). O!

Charles (*strangely*). Come here.

Paula. O, sir!

Charles (*taking her wrist*). Were you not in a haste?

Paula. I—I—I do not know.

Charles. Girl!—Why do you then
Drop fearful to your knees?

Paula. 'Tis late, sir, late.
Let me go in!

Charles. You have a mistress who
Keeps quick temptation in her eyes and hair.
A shy mole, too, lies pillowed on her cheek.
Does she rest well?

Paula. My lord——

Charles. Ah, so? most well?
But sometimes walks asleep? and you have come
To fetch her?

Paula. Loose me, sir!

Charles. Or she has left
Her kerchief in some nook; you seek it?

Paula. Oh,
Your eyes! your eyes!

Charles. I have a son . . . are his
Not like them?

Paula. Sir, my wrist!

Charles. It was—at night, then?
You could not see him clearly?

Paula. Mercy!

Charles (*looking about*). Yet
Perchance he, too, walks in his sleep. Were it
Quite well if they have met, these two that walk?

Paula. My lady, my sweet lady!

Charles (*releasing her*). Go, for she
Still wonderful may lie upon her couch,
One arm dropt whitely.—If you prayed for her—
If you should pray for her—something may chance:
There is so much may chance—we cannot know.

[PAULA *goes.*

So much we cannot know! for even this child,
Who serves about her, swathing up her hair,
Has might too much!

Hæmon. My lord! o'er whom? You fog me.

Charles. Be still.

Hæmon. Antonio?

Charles. Can I not think,
"Helena," but you link "Antonio" to it?
Can they not be, yet be apart? Will winds
Not bear them and not sound them separate!
If angels cry one at the stars, will they
But echo back the other?—This is froth—
The froth and fume of folly. You are thick
In falsity and in disquietude.
Another rapture rules Antonio's eye,
Not Helena.

Hæmon. And you know it, yet lead
Her to his arms?

Charles. No! mole, who burrow so
Under a blind and muddy misbelief!
To mine is she come here . . . and only mine!

And were he a seraph who from Paradise
Desired to fold her —were—ay!—were he . . .
No mercy!— But, I will speak as a child;
As he who woke with Ruth fair at his feet.
Long have I gleaned amid the years and lone:
She shall glean softly now beside me, softly,
Till sunset fail in me and I am night.

Hæmon. This is a gin, a net, and I am fast.

Charles. A net to snare what never has been free?

Hæmon. It must be—all! For tenderness lives false
Upon your lips.

Charles. Though you live still who say it?

Hæmon. Then . . . shall he rest, lie easy down and rest
In treachery?

Charles. Who?

Hæmon. Ah!

Charles. Antonio?

Hæmon. Is it not clear? Is it not open?

Charles (*confusedly*). No.

Hæmon. This maid who called—did she come idly here?

By chance?

Charles. Yes.

Hæmon. And did I, at a strange hour?

Charles. Say on.

Hæmon. And have I entered a strange way?

Charles. You pause and ever pause upon my patience!

'Twill heave unbearably!

Hæmon. Then hear the whole.

Senseless against a bank I found a boy,

Hurled by some ruthless hoof. Near him this key

And writing—that avers—

Charles. On, on!

Hæmon. Mid lines,

Clandestine of purport, Antonio

And Helena under these shades at twelve——

Charles. Enough! This brings a furious desolation!

Go: call me Fulvia.

Hæmon. Not there is trust!
She is aware and aids in this deceit.
This writing says it of her.
Charles. Fulvia? No!
No, no! . . . Though she had sudden whispers for
him!
A lie! . . . Yet fast belief fixes its fangs
On me and will not loose me: for against
My hope she set a coldness and a doubt!
O woman woven through all fibres of me!
(*Starting up.*) But he—!
Hæmon. Ah, then, you can remember, can——
With pangs that answer mine?
Charles (*quietly*). They still may be . . . !
Hæmon. Under these shades?
Charles. And lips to lips!
Hæmon. My lord!
You see at last?
Charles. Hush! something. No, it was
But fate cried out in me, not any voice.
Hæmon. We must be swift.

Charles. It cries again. I will
Not listen! He's not flesh of me—not flesh!
A traitor is no son, nor was, nor shall be!
Though it shriek desolation utterly
I will not listen!

Hæmon. Do not.

Charles. And to-day
He shook, ashen and clenched, remembering
The guilty secret in him!

Hæmon. He! who's free.

Charles. My words fell warm as tears—"A rift has come,
A rift, a smile, a breath"—men speak so when
They've crept from madness up into some space
Whose element is love.

Hæmon. Then will you sink
Now to a palsy? you who should o'erwhelm
With penalty?

Charles (*rousing*). No! all and ever false
Is he who's so when most he should be true!

I will make treachery bitter to all times!
Bring dread on all to whom are given sons.
Down generations shall they peer and tremble,
Look on me as on majesties accursed!—
Search every shade—search, search! You stand as death.
I am in famine till he give me groans.

[*They go in opposite directions.* FULVIA *enters, distrest, with* GUILIA.

Fulvia. He was with Hæmon?
Guilia. On that seat.
Fulvia. Convulsed?
Yet passionless?
Guilia. His words were low.
Fulvia. Why were
You not asleep?
Guilia. I——
Fulvia. Did he pace the path
Peacelessly as he said it?
Guilia. I was behind——

Fulvia. And could not see? But heard their
names from him?
The Greek is still without?
Guilia. My lady, yes.
Fulvia. Your voice is guilty. How came Hæ-
mon in?
Answer me, answer. No, go quickly, go,
Learn if the duke has entered. If he has not——

[*Words and swords are heard, then a shriek from* HELENA. CHARLES *rushes in, furious, a wound in his arm. He is followed by* HELENA, ANTONIO, *who is dazed; and from the castle by* HÆMON, CECCO, *the guards, etc.*

Antonio. Sir! father! you? . . . I knew it not,
so swift
Your rage fell on me.
Charles (*to Guard*). Gaping, ghastly fool!
Do you behold him murderous and lay
No hand on him!
Antonio. But, sir—!

Charles. Let him not fawn
About me! Seize him! God forgives not Hell.
Not this blood only but my soul's be on him.

Helena. Oh, do not, he—!

Charles. Stand! stand! Touch me not with
Your voice or eyes or being! They are soft
With perfidy, and stole me to believe
There's sweetness in a flower, light in air
And beauty in the innocence of earth.
Bind him! Leucadia's just cliff awaits
All traitors . . . 'tis the law, they must be flung
Out on the dizzy and supportless wind.

Fulvia. But this shall never be! No . . . though
your looks
Heave out with hate upon me.

Charles (*convulsed, then coldly*). You are dead,
And speak to me. Once you were Fulvia—
No more! And once my friend . . . now but a
ghost
Whom I must gaze upon forgetlessly.

[*To* GUARDS.

Obey, at once! And at to-morrow's sunset.

[ANTONIO *is seized and led out.*

Helena (*at* CHARLES'S *feet*). You cannot, will not! . . . Oh, he is your son—

And loves you much!

Charles. Touch me not! touch me not!

(*To* HÆMON.) Lead her away—and quickly, quickly, quickly!

[HÆMON *obeys.*

Friends, friends?—(*clutching his wound*). I am quite friendless now! . . . Ah—quite!

[*Faints.*

Fulvia. Charles! ah! my lord! return! return! (*down by him.*) A numbness

Has barred the war of soothing to his breast!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE: *A chamber in the castle, opening on the right to a hall, curtained on the left from another chamber. In the rear is a window through which may be seen silvery hills of olive resting under the late afternoon sun; by it a shrine. Chairs, etc. Enter the* CAPTAIN *of the* GUARD *and a* SOLDIER *from the hall.*

Soldier. There is no more?

Captain. Not if you understand

Soldier. That do I—every link of it! I've served
Under the bold de Montreal; and he,
For stratagems—well, Italy knows him!

Captain. You must be quick and secret.

Soldier. As the end
Of the world!

Captain. Our duty's with the duke. But then
Antonio has our love.

Soldier. That has he! Ah,
That has he!

Captain. Well, be close. None must escape,
Remember, none be hurt. As for the princess,
We'll hear the chink of ducats with her thanks.

Soldier. Madonna save her!—The Judas of a father
Who robs her rest! (*Listens.*) She comes!

Captain (*looking down hall*). Yes, it is she.
So go, and haste. But fail not.

Soldier. If I do
Bury me with a pagan, next a Turk!

[*Goes.*

Enter FULVIA.

Captain. Princess——

Fulvia. Our plans grow to fulfilment—are
No way misplanted?

Captain. Lady, all seems now
Seasonable for their expected fruit.

Fulvia. No accident appears to threaten them?

Captain. Doubt not a fullest harvest of your hope.
The duke himself shall for this deed at last
Have benediction.

Fulvia. May it be! He's quick—
Though quicker in forgetting. I will move
Him as I may.

Captain. The kind and wise assaults
Your words shall make must move him, gracious lady.

[*Is going.*

Enter HÆMON.

Hæmon. I seek the duke.

Fulvia (*dismissing* CAPTAIN). You would seek penitence
Were you less far in folly.

Hæmon. Oh—if he's
Not here——

Fulvia. Regretting, too, would strain your lips,
Not cold defiance.

Hæmon. Pardon. If you know,
Where is he?

Fulvia. Was it easy to o'erwhelm
Under the ruins of her dreams, a sister?

Hæmon. Better beneath her dreams than under shame.

Fulvia. Your rashness cloaks itself in that excuse,
Your ruth, and your suspicion that has doomed
One innocent.

Hæmon. Fa! innocent. His thought
Had but betrayal for her.

Fulvia. 'Tis the Greek
In you avows it, no true voice.

Hæmon. Then 'tis
My father murdered, whose last moan I hear

Driven about me in this castle's gray
Cold spaces. And the dead speak not to lie.

Fulvia. But to admonish, do. So you in vain
Are braving with the spur of this belief.

Hæmon. What do you want of me?

Fulvia. This: and at once.
An ache, a restlessness are on you——

Hæmon (*impatiently*). No.

Fulvia. And doubt begins in you, that as a wolf
Will scent the wounded quarry of your conscience.

Hæmon. After he lured and wooed her under night
And secrecy?

Fulvia. Not running there will you
Escape its dread pursuit.

Hæmon. He frauded, duped
His father's trust!

Fulvia. Or there! But one refuge
Have you against its bitter ceaseless tooth,
And that above the wilds of self-deceit.

[*A pause.*

Hæmon. No refuge can be from an hour that's gone.

Shall we invert the glass or tilt the dial

To bring it back?

Fulvia. But if there were?

Hæmon. Where is

The duke? I will not bauble.

Fulvia. If there were?

Hæmon. I will no longer listen to the worm

You set to feed upon me, torturing.

The sun melts to an end, and with the night

Antonio will not be.

Fulvia. Yet there is time.

Hæmon. The duke is fixed.

Fulvia. And I. Against the lurch

And power of this peril we must lean.

Hæmon. When?

Fulvia. Now.

Hæmon. You have a plan?

Fulvia. One that is sure.

[*Steps are heard.*

But one for wisdom. So, for more seek out
The captain of the guard. I wait the duke.

[HÆMON *goes through the curtains.* CHARLES *enters worn, dishevelled, with* CECCO. . . . *Sees* FULVIA *and pauses.*

Fulvia. I come to plead.

Charles. Ah, Nature should have pled
With her, your mother—against conception; go!

[*Moves off.*

Fulvia. Your trust is causelessly withdrawn.
Yet for
A breath again I beg it—for a moment!

Charles. A moment were too much—or not enough.
Is trust a flower of sudden birth, we may
Bid bloom with a command?

Fulvia. Ah, that it were,
Or bloomed as amaranth in those we love,
Beyond all drouth and withering of ill!—
But, hear me—

Charles. Leave these words.

Fulvia. Will you not turn

Out of this rage?

Charles. Leave them, I say, and cease!

Still down the vortex of this destiny

I would not have you farther drawn.

Fulvia. Then from

It draw yourself!

Charles. Myself am but a hulk—

Whose treasures have already been engulfed.

Fulvia. Yet shrink from it!

Charles. A son, a friend, a—No,

She was not mine!—I will not turn.

Fulvia. It is

Your fury that distorts us into guilt.

For tho' Antonio will not crush his heart,

But flings you stony and unfilial speech,

Fearing for her—

Charles. Leave!

Fulvia. We—

Charles. Thrice I have said it!

Fulvia. Yet must I not until your will is wasted.

Charles. Ah! (*Sits.*) . . . Cecco!

Cecco. My lord?

Charles. The hour?

Cecco (*at the window*). It leans to sunset.

[FULVIA *goes.*

Charles. The sky—the sky?

Cecco. A murk moves slowly up.

Charles (*wearily*). There should be storm . . .
gloating of wind and grind
Of hopeless thunders. Lightnings should laugh out
As tongues of fiends. . . . There should be storm.

[*His head sinks on his breast.*

(*Suddenly.*) Yet!—yet!—

Cecco. My lord—?

Charles. The glow and glory of her seem
Dead in me!

Cecco. Of the Greek?

Charles. And yearning has
Grown impotent—as would an ash of folly,

A left and quickly quenched desire of youth
Kindled in me!—To youth alone love's sudden.

Cecco. Sir, dare I speak?

Charles. Speak.

Cecco. When Antonio—

Charles. Cease; but a whisper of his name and I
Am frenzy—frenzy—though the stillness burns
And bursts with it!

[Cecco *steps back.*

The sun, how hangs it now?

Cecco. Above the bloody waving of the sea,
Eager to dip.

Charles (*staggering up*). Ah, I was in a foam—
Bitten by hounds of fury and despair!
Did you not, Fulvia, pleading for them, say
They quailed but would not flee and leave me waste?

Cecco. She is not here, my liege.

Charles. Antonio!
Boy, boy! Thou ever wast to me as wafts
Of light, of song, of summer on the hills!

Soft now I feel thy baby arms about me,
And all the burgeon of thy youth, ere proud
And cruel years grew in me, comes again,
On wings and stealing winds of memory!

Cecco. Oh, then, sir——

Charles. Yes. Fly, fly! and stay the guard!
He must not—ah!—down fearful fathoms . . .
down
Into the roar!

[Cecco *starts—he stops him.*

Yet me he has flung from
Immeasurable peaks and I have sunk
Forevermore beneath hope's horizon.
Who falls so close the grave can rise no more.

[*A silence.*

Cecco. This your despair would wound him
more than death.
Forget the girl.

Charles. She? . . . Ah, my sullen, wild
And gloomy pulse beat with a rightful scorn

Against the hours that sieged it. Stony was
Its solitude and fierce, bastioned against
All danger of quick blisses . . . till with fury
For that mute tenderness which women's love
Lays on the desolation of the world,
She ravished it!—and now has left it cold.

Cecco. As it should be, sir. And remember she
Moved you unknowingly.

Charles. A woman's smile
Never was luring, never, but she knew it,
As hawk the cruel rapture of his wings.

Cecco. She though is young and youth—

Charles. Must pay with moan
And shriving!—Go; the sun—the sun—where burns it?

Cecco (*at the window*). Upon a cloud, whence it must spring to night.

Charles. So low?

Cecco. Sir, yes.

Charles. It is? so low?

Cecco. Red, now,
It rushes forth.
Charles. A breathing of the world,
And then—! Antonio!
Cecco. Again a cloud
Withholds it.
Charles. Boy—my boy!
Cecco. It dips, my lord!
Charles (*frenzied*). Ah, will great Christ upon
it lay no fear!
Let it sink down as if its swooning sent
No signal unto death—and plunge, plunge thee,
Antonio, forever from the day!
Has He no miracle to seize it yet!
Nor will not lend his thunder to cry hold,
His lightning to flame off the hands that grasp,
Bidden to hurl thee o'er?
Cecco. 'Tis sunk!
Charles (*rushing to window*). Yes!—yes!
(*Starting back horrified.*) The vision of it! Ah,
see you not, see?

They lift him, swing him—now! down, down,
down, down!
The rocks . . . the lash! . . . the foam!

[*Sinks exhausted in his chair.* CECCO
pours out wine.
Enter hurriedly a SOLDIER.

Soldier. Great lord!
Cecco. Fellow, what now? be gone!
what now?
It is ill-timed.
Soldier. Great lord, there's mutiny!
Cecco. And where?
Soldier. Hear me, great sir, there's mutiny!
Cecco. Within the town?
Charles (*rousing*). Ay—?
Soldier. Mutiny! your haste.
Charles. Oh—mutiny.
Soldier. Sir, yes!
Charles. And do the ranks
Of Hell roar up at me?— It is not strange.

Soldier (*confused*). The ranks of—? Pardon, lord.

Charles. Do the skies rage? They were else dead to madness.

Soldier. Sir, it is Your guard beyond the gates.

Charles. 'Tis every throat Of earth and realm unearthly has a cry Against me and against!

Soldier. No; but a few—!

Charles. You doubt it?—Are my eyes not bloody? Say!

Soldier. Sir! sir!

Charles. My lips, are they not pale with murder, Bitterly done?

Soldier. Pale—no.

Charles. Yet—I have killed; Spoke death with them; not reasonless—yet death. And all the lost have echoes of it; hear You not a spirit clamor on the air?

Ploughing as storms of pain it passes through me.
Mutiny? . . . Go. I could call chaos fair,
And fawn on infinite ruin—fawn and praise.

[Soldier *goes.*

Yet will not yield! (*To* Cecco.) My robes and coronet!

[Cecco *goes.*

I'll sit in them and mock at greatness that
A passion may unthrone. If we weep not,
Calamity will leave to torture us,
And fate for want of tears will thirst to death.

[*Enter* Julian.

Ah, priestly sir.

Julian. Infuriate man!

Charles. Speak so.

I lust for bitterness.

Julian. What have you done!

Charles (*shuddering, then smiling*).

Watched the sun set. Did it not, think you, bleed
Unwontedly along the waves?

Julian. Oh, horror!

Horrible when a father slays and smiles!

Charles. Not so, Lord Cardinal, not so!—but when
He slays and smileth not.

Julian. Beyond all mercy!

Charles. Therefore I smile. Men should not mid the trite
Enchanting and vain trickery of earth,
Till they no longer hope of it or want.
Smiles should be kept for life's unbearable.

Julian. Murderer!

Charles. Ah!

Julian. Heretic!

Charles (*goes to shrine*). Well?

[*Casts shrine out of window.*

Julian. Fool! fool!

Charles. There are no wise men, O Lord Cardinal!

Julian. Heaven let Antonio's death under the sea
Make every wave a tongue against your rest,

And 'gainst the rock of this impenitence!

[CHARLES *listens as to something far off.*

No wind should blow that has not sting of it,
No light stream that it stains not!

Charles (*sighs*). You have loosed
Your robe, lord prelate, see!

Julian. Oh, stone! thou stone!

Charles. Have peace. A keener cry comes up to me
Than frenzy can invoke; a vaster pain
Than justice from Omnipotence may call.

Julian. My lips shall learn it!

Charles. "Father," moans it, "Father!"—
It is my ears' inheritance forever.

Enter FULVIA.

Fulvia. Lord Cardinal, one of your servants has
Been struck in quarrel, and, it seems, mortally.
Attend to him; then I may plead of you
Escort to Rome.

Julian (*as* CHARLES *stares*). I do not understand.

Fulvia. But shall.

Charles. To Rome?

Fulvia. Do not pause here to learn
With the dear minutes of a dying man.

[JULIAN *goes.*

Charles. You baffle and bewilder me.... You—?
yes! . . .
I am beat off by it.

Fulvia. Ten years of shelter
You have held over me.

Charles. Ten years—

Fulvia. Whose days,
Whose every moment else had been a torture.

Charles. Now—?

Fulvia. I, perhaps, must go.

Charles. Must? . . . still I grope.

Fulvia. Must go! . . . Though in this castle's
aged calm
And melancholy dusk no shadow is
Or niche but may remember prayer for you.

Charles. To Rome? . . . You must? . . . I am under a spell.

Fulvia. We, you and I, after the battle's foam
Or chase's tired return, have often breathed
The passionate deep hours away in rest
And sympathy.

Charles. So; oft. But, on—I marvel—!

Fulvia. And at the dawn have looked and sighed, then slow
With quiet clasp of fingers turned apart.

Charles. Unto calm days. But in your tone I feel——

Fulvia. Have we not fast been friends?

Charles. What hath your voice?

Fulvia. Such friends have we not been as grow up from
Eternity?

Charles. You say it—and I wake.

Fulvia. E'er such . . . until last night within the garden
You changed as the sea changes under storm.

Charles. I had forgot!—forgot! . . . the sun!
the sea!
The sea!—Antonio! . . . The cliff—the surf!
The shroud and funeral fury of the waves!

Fulvia. Be calm.

Charles. I'll stay it!

[*Up, excitedly.*

Cecco! our fleetest foot!
A rain of ducats if he shall outspeed
This doom to us. More! more! a flood of them,
If he——

Fulvia (*reseating him*). Be patient—calm.

Charles. I—I—remember:
'Tis night!

Fulvia. Yes, night.

Charles. The sun's no more. It hath
Gone down beyond all mercy and recall.

Fulvia. Perhaps.

Charles (*quickly*). Fulvia? . . .

Fulvia. It is hard to think!

Charles. You utter and he seemeth still of life!

Fulvia. He was a child in mimic mail clad out
When first this threshold poured its welcome to me.
Charles. Softly you muse it . . . and call to your eyes
No quailing nor a flame of execration.
You do not burst out on me? from me do
Not shrink—as from an executioner?
Fulvia. I am a woman who in tears came to
Your strength; in tears depart.
Charles. And will not judge?
But fear me! fear, and flee? . . . You shall not go.
Fulvia. Perhaps.
Charles. Again you hide behind "perhaps"?
To Rome?—I say you shall not.
Fulvia. Yet should he,
Antonio, from those curtains come——
Charles. Should—should?
You speak not reasonably. Why do you say
"If he should come?" because . . .? There is no reason . . .!

You've led me trembling from reality.
Those curtains?—those?—just those?... You shall not go.

Fulvia. I will not, then.

Charles. But something breaks from you,
And as an air of resurrection stirs.
Speak; on your words I wait unutterably.

Fulvia. Did not a soldier lately come, my lord,
Breathless, with eager speech of mutiny?

Charles. He did.

Fulvia. Within your guard.

Charles. No—yes. The guard?
What do I see yet cannot in your words?

Fulvia. The mutiny was raised at my command——

Charles. Say it, say all!

Fulvia. To save you the mad blot
Of a son's blood.

Charles. Antonio—?

Fulvia. Lives! . . . He lives!

Charles (*staggering back*). Low . . . low! . . .
Joy come too furious is frenzy.
He lives?—You have done this? with these soft hands,
These little hands, held off the shears of fate?
Have dared? and have not feared?
Fulvia. Your danger was
My fear—that, and no more.
Charles (*with joy*). He lives? . . . I have
No deed to answer this! no gratitude,
No gift, no worth, no glow, no eloquence
But would sound poor in richest words of earth.
He lives?— Years yet are mine. Too brief they'll be
To muse with love of this!
Fulvia. No, no, my lord.
Charles. But where is he? Belief, tho' risen in me,
Strains as if fast enfolded still in cerements
That seeing must unbind.

Fulvia. Then turn and see.

[ANTONIO *steps from the curtains.*

Charles. Antonio!—boy, boy!

Antonio (*as they embrace*). My father! . . .

Re-enter JULIAN.

Julian. Princess,
If your decision and desire are still—

[*Sees* ANTONIO.

Fulvia. Your eyes look upon flesh, lord Cardinal.

[*A cry is heard, then weeping.*

Antonio (*startled*). Whose pain is that? . . .
strangely it hurts me—strangely!

Enter CECCO, *disturbed.*

Cecco. My lord, the lady Helena's little maid—

[*Sees* ANTONIO. *Shrinks from him.*

Antonio. What of her? Are you horrified to
stone?
Her maid? . . . There are than risen dead worse
things—
And worse to dread!—her maid?

Cecco. Sir——

Antonio. Forth with it!

Has she revealed some direness to her mistress?

That earth has opened and abyssed her up?

Or butterfly or bud turned asp to bite her?

Cecco. Sir—she—the maid—craves audience with the duke.

Antonio. Fetch her, and quickly.

[Cecco *goes.*

Fulvia. Reason, Antonio.

[*In suspense.*

She'll only whimper, tell what overmuch

Of grief her mistress makes for you, of tears

Your sunny safe returning will dry in her!

Antonio. These hours come not of any good, but are

Infected with resolved adversity.

This dread—!

Fulvia. They ever dread who have but quit

The shadow of some doom—and the dismay.

[*Re-enter* Cecco, *with* Paula *weeping.*

Antonio. Girl, girl? Your mistress?

Paula (*shrinking*). Oh!

Antonio. I am no ghost.
Your mistress?

Paula. Mary, Mother!

[*Sinks praying.*

Antonio (*lifting her up*). Look on me. See!
I have not been down in the grave, nor even
A moment beyond earth. Do you not hear?

Paula. Sir!

Antonio. Tell me.

Paula (*hysterically*). Go to her, oh, go to her!

Antonio. But, child—?

Paula. She, oh! go seek her, oh, she is——

Antonio. Where, Paula?

Paula. Blind all day she moaned and wept——

Antonio. My Helena!

Paula. And when the sun was gone,
Came quiet, kissed me. . . . Oh, go seek her, sir!

Antonio. Kissed you—?

Paula. Then to me gave these jewels. Oh!
And darkly cloaked stole out into the night.

Charles. Alone?

Antonio. Whither, quick, whither?

Paula. Ah, I do
Not know, but she——

Antonio. Pray, pray, tell out your dread.

Paula. Last night she said "my heart is in my lord
Antonio's to beat or cease with it."
I learned her words—they seemed so winning.

Charles. Ah! . . .

Antonio (*dazed*). Why do you gasp?—Paula—

Charles. If she . . . the cliff!

Antonio. The cliff! The—?

[*Staggers dizzily, then rushes out.*

Charles. Let one go with him, bring
Us what hath passed.

Cecco. Sir, yes.

[*Goes.*

Paula (*with uncontrollable terror*). My lady!

Charles. Child,

I cannot bear thy voice upon my heart!

It hath a tone—a clutch— No more, no more!

I cannot bear it! We must wait. No hap

Has been—no hap, I think—surely no hap.

Enter BARDAS, *deprecatingly, followed by* ANTONIO.

Bardas. Not in the sea, Antonio? You live?

Antonio. I say, where is she?

Bardas. You are mortal?

Antonio (*groaning with impatience*). Oh,

This utter superstition! (*Pricking his arm.*) Is it not blood?

Bardas. You live? and live? But let her think your death?

You've let her! here devising for yourself

Safety and preservation?

Antonio. . She's not safe?

Bardas. Ha, safe—if she had shrift.

Charles (*hoarsely*). The dead are so!

Bardas. Ay, so.

Antonio. And none above the grave? . . . no answer?

Bardas. She came unto the cliff amid her tears.
Her being all into one want was fused,
You down the wave to follow.

Antonio. But you grasped—?
You held her?

Bardas. Yes.

Antonio. Then? well?

Bardas. She had a phial.

Antonio. God! God!

Bardas. Out of her breast she drew it swift,
And instant of it drank.

Antonio. A little? all?
No, no!—no! but you dashed it from her lips?
She did but taste?

Bardas. Only; and then——

Antonio. More? more?

Bardas. "Is't not enough," she pled to me,
"Enough
That I must wander the cold way of death

Unto his arms? Leave me! There is no rest.
I will go down and clasp him, drift with him
To some unhabited gray ocean vale
God hath forgot. There we will dwell away
From destiny and weeping, from despair!"

Antonio. But you still held her?

Bardas. Still; her hand in mine.
But revellers came and saw us—jested her
Of taking a new love!—She broke my grasp——

Charles. And leapt! on the wide air?

Bardas. Swifter than all
Prevention.

Antonio. Helena! . . . my Helena!
Has all thy loveliness so fared to this,
Thy glory gone in dark calamity?

Bardas. I saw her as she leapt, and until death
Shall see no more.

Antonio. Nor may you, may you, ever!

[*Distractedly.*

But may her sorrow and her fairness stand

Imprisoned in your eye, to haunt and cry
Relentlessly this crime.—But no; but no.

[*Turns blindly, swaying with grief, and passes out.*

Paula. Let me go to my lady!

Charles. Still her! she
Forever hath a fluttering, a cry
Unbearable. It presses the lone air
With sensitive and aching agony.

Paula (*witlessly, in tears*). I know thy song, my lady, I know, I know!
'Twas pretty and 'twas strange, but now I know.

[*Sings*

Sappho! Sappho!
In maiden woe
(Let alone love, it spurns and burns!)
Wept, wept, and leapt—
O love is so!
(Let alone love, it burns!)

My lady! oh, my lady! my sweet lady!

[*She is led out.*

Fulvia. This is most sad—most sad and pitiful.

Charles. I cannot bear her voice upon my heart.

[AGABUS *enters, gazing.*

And now this monk? this dog of death? he—now?

Agabus. My trusty Shadow! (*madly.*) Ha, he has been here!

My king of the worms and all corruption!

(*Approaches Charles.*) Lovers and lovers! Oh, she leapt as 'twere

To Christ and not sin's Pit! . . . And he has gone

To follow her!

Fulvia. My lord!

Agabus. To follow her.

[*Wanders about.*

The devil's nine wits are too many.

Fulvia (*staring*). Oh!

[*Then seeing* CHARLES *rigid.*

Never an end? . . . but . . . now . . .
more?
(*To him.*) Move, rouse, my lord! . . .
It is not truth but madness that he speaks.

[*A cry and clanking of armor are heard without. A* SOLDIER *bursts into the chamber—and sinks to his knees.*

Soldier. O duke! O duke!

Charles (*gazing at him*). Rise—go—and if thou canst—
To pray.

Soldier. Oh, sir—!

Charles. You have no tidings.

Soldier. Sir—!

Charles (*desperately*). None, fool! but come to say what silence groans,
What earth numb and in deadness raves to me.
To tell Antonio hath gone out and o'er
A precipice hath stepped for sake of love.
This is not tidings. Hath it not on me
Been fixed forever? It is older than

Despair, as old as pain! . . . (*To* HÆMON, *who enters.*) Your sister——

Bardas. Hæmon—!

Julian. Hold him not in this anguish.

Fulvia. She and our
Antonio have left us to our tears.

[HÆMON *stands motionless.*

Charles. Let no one groan. I say let no one groan.

[*Rocks blindly.*

Fury on him that groans! . . .

Fulvia. My lord!

Charles (*taking her hand*). Well, come.

[*As in a trance.*

There's much to do. We will think of the dead—
Perchance 'twill keep them near us—Speak to them,
And they may answer while we wait, may float
Dim words on moonbeams to us. Oh, for one
That shall sound of forgiveness and of rest!

[*More wildly.*

Oh, I have started on the mountain's brow
A tremor that has loosed the avalanche,
And penitence, too late, too late, too late,
Was powerless as flowers along its path!

[*Sinks back in his chair and stares hopelessly before him.*

CURTAIN.

NIRVANA DAYS

First Published 1909

To
JAMES LANE ALLEN
With Friendship and Faithful Esteem

INVOCATION

(*From a High Cliff*)

Sweep unrest
Out of my blood,
Winds of the sea! Sweep the fog
Out of my brain
For I am one
Who has told Life he will be free.
Who will not doubt of work that's done,
Who will not fear the work to do.
Who will hold peaks Promethean
Better than all Jove's honey-dew.
Who when the Vulture tears his breast
Will smile into the Terror's Eyes.
Who for the World has this Bequest—
Hope, that eternally is wise.

THE STRONG MAN TO HIS SIRES

Tonight as I was riding on a wave
  Of triumph and of glory,
A Question suddenly, as from the grave,
  Rose in me, culpatory.

"Whence come to you this joyance and this
    strength,"
  It said, "this might of vision?
This will that measures all things to its length,
  That cuts with calm decision?

"This blood within your veins, that is as wine
  Which Destiny's self blesses,
Whence flows it, from what grape that is divine,
  Or trodden from what presses?

"Do you so proud forget what hands have borne
You to the heights and crowned you?
Would you behold what sackcloth has been worn
That laurels may surround you?" . . .

And "Yea!" I answered with affirming breath,
"I would! you who arraign me!
Whose words are as a sound sent forth of Death,
And like to Death entrain me.

"I would! For if the flesh of me and soul
Are fibred with the ages,
My triumph is of them and manifold
Of all life's mystic stages."

So, forth they came—a vast ancestral line,
Upon my vision teeming,
All shapes whom birth and nature could affine
Unto me, faintly gleaming.

I knew them as I knew myself, and felt
The Day of each within me;
And so began to speak, the while they dwelt
About—they who had been me.

"My Sires," I said, "think you I have forgot
The fervor of your living?
How into me is moulded all you thought,
Of getting or of giving?

"Think you I do not feel my every drop
Of blood is as an ocean
In which are surging and will never stop
All things your hope gave motion?

"My senses, that are swift to take delight
And shrine it in their being,
Are they not born of all your faith, and bright
With all your bliss of seeing?

"And my full heart within whose fount I hear
Your voices that are vanished,
Can it forget its gratitude or fear
The foes *you* braved and banished?

"No.—But the blindly striving years that led
Your eyes first up to Beauty,
Or taught you out of Ill to disembed
The golden veins of Duty;

"The wasting and incalculable wants
That in you quailed or quivered;
The longing that lit stars no dark now daunts—
I know, who stand delivered!

"To you then from whose throng the centuries
Long dead slip now their shrouding,
Who from oblivion's profundities
Rise up, and round are crowding,

"I say, Immortal do I hold your will!
Its gathered might ascending
Is sacred with the unconquerable might
Of God—who sees its ending;

"Of God—on whose strong Vine, Heredity,
Rooted in Voids primeval,
The world climbs ever to some great To-Be
Of passion or reprieval."

I said—and on night's infinite beheld
Silence alone beside me;
And majesty of greater meanings welled
Into my soul, to guide me.

THE FAIRIES OF GOD

Last night I slipt from the banks of dream
And swam in the currents of God,
On a tide where His fairies were at play,
Catching salt tears in their little white hands,
For human hearts;
And dancing, dancing, in gala bands,
On the currents of God;
And singing, singing:—
There is no wind blows here or spray—
Wind upon us!
Only the waters ripple away
Under our feet as we gather tears.
God has made mortals for the years,
Us for alway!
God has made mortals full of fears,

Fears for the night and fears for the day.
If they would free them from grief that sears,
If they would keep all that love endears,
If they would lay no more lilies on biers—
Let them say!
For we are swift to enchant and tire
Time's will!
Our feet are wiser than all desire,
Our song is better than faith or fame;
To whom it is given no ill e'er came,
Who has it not grows chill!
Who has it not grows laggard and lame,
Nor knows that the world is a Minstrel's lyre,
Smitten and never still! . . .
Last night on the currents of God.

A SONG OF THE OLD VENETIANS

The seven fleets of Venice
Set sail across the sea
For Cyprus and for Trebizond
Ayoub and Araby.
Their gonfalons are floating far,
St. Mark's has heard the mass,
And to the noon the salt lagoon
Lies white, like burning glass.

The seven fleets of Venice—
And each its way to go,
Led by a Falier or Tron,
Zorzi or Dandalo.
The Patriarch has blessed them all,
The Doge has waved the word,

And in their wings the murmurings
Of waiting winds are heard.

The seven fleets of Venice—
And what shall be their fate?
One shall return with porphyry
And pearl and fair agàte.
One shall return with spice and spoil
And silk of Samarcand.
But nevermore shall *one* win o'er
The sea, to any land.

Oh, they shall bring the East back,
And they shall bring the West,
The seven fleets our Venice sets
A-sail upon her quest.
But some shall bring despair back
And some shall leave their keels
Deeper than wind or wave frets,
Or sun ever steals.

NIRVANA DAYS

I

If I were in Japan today,
In little Japan today,
I'd watch the sampan-rowers ride
On Yokohama bay.
I'd watch the little flower-folk
Pass on the Bund, where play
Of "foreign" music fills their ears
With wonder new alway.

Or in a kuruma I'd step
And "Noge-yama!" cry,
And bare brown feet should wheel me fast
Where Noge-yama, high

Above the city and sea's vast
  Uprises, with the sigh
Of pines about its festal fanes
  Built free to sun and sky.

And there till dusk I'd sit and think
  Of Shaka Muni, lord
Of Buddhas; or of Fudo's fire
  And rope and lifted sword.
And, ere I left, a surging shade
  Of clouds, a distant horde,
Should break and Fugi's cone stand clear—
  With sutras overscored.

Sutras of ice and rock and snow,
  Written by hands of heat
And thaw upon it, till 'twould seem
  Meant for the final seat
Of the lord Buddha and his bliss—
  If ever he repeat

This life where millions still are bound
Within Illusion's cheat.

II

Or were I in Japan today—
Perchance at Kyoto—
Down Tera-machi I would search
For charm or curio.
Up narrow stairs in sandals pure
Of soil or dust I'd go
Into a room of magic shapes—
Gods, dragons, dread Nio.

And seated on the silent mats,
With many a treasure near—
Of ivory the gods have dreamt,
And satsuma as dear,
Of bronzes whose mysterious mint
Seems not of now or here—

I'd buy and dream and dream and buy,
Lost far in Mâyâ's sphere.

Then gathering up my gains at last,
Mid "sayonaras" soft
And bows and gentle courtesies
Repeated oft and oft,
My host and I should part—"O please
The skies much weal to waft
His years," I'd think, then cross San-jo
To fair Chion-in aloft.

For set aloft and set apart,
Beyond the city's din,
Under the shade of ancient heights
Lies templed calm Chion-in.
And there the great bell's booming fills
Its gates all day, and thin
Low beating on mokugyo, by
Priests passioning for sin.

And there the sun upon its courts
And carvings, gods and graves,
Rests as no light of earth-lands known,
Like to Nirvana laves
And washes with sweet under-flow
Into the soul's far caves.
And no more shall this life seem real
To one who feels its waves.

"No more!" I'd say, then wander on
To Kiyomizu-shrine,
Which is so old antiquity's
Far self cannot divine
Its birth, but knows that Kwannon, she
Of mercy's might benign,
Has reached her thousand hands alway
From it to Nippon's line.

And She should hear my many prayers,
And have my freest gifts.

And many days beside her should
I watch the crystal rifts
Of Otawa's clear waters earn
Their way, o'er rocks and drifts,
Beside the trestled temple down—
Like murmurs of sweet shrifts.

Then, when the city wearied me,
To Katsura I'd wend—
A garden hid across green miles
Of rice-lands quaintly penned.
And, by the stork-bestridden lake,
I'd walk or musing mend
My soul with lotus-memories
And hopes—without an end.

III

Or were I in Japan today,
Hiroshima should call

My heart—Hiroshima built round
Her ancient castle wall.
By the low flowering moat where sun
And silence ever fall
Into a swoon, I'd build again
Old days of Daimyo thrall.

Of charge and bloody countercharge,
When many a samurai
Fierce-panoplied fell at its pale,
Suppressing groan or cry;
Suppressing all but silent hates
That swept from eye to eye,
While lips smiled decorously on,
Or mocked urbane goodbye.

Then to the river I would pass
And drift upon its tide
By many a tea-house hung in bloom
Above its mirrored side.

And geisha fluttering gay before
Their guests should pause in pied
Kimono, then with laughter bright
Behind the shoji hide.

Unto an isle of Ugina's
Low port my craft should swing,
Or scarce an island seems it now
To my fair fancying,
But a shrined jut of earth up thro
The sea from which to sing
Unto the evening star of all
Night's incarnations bring.

Then backward thro the darkened streets
I'd walk: long lanterns writ
With ghostly characters should dance
Beside each door, or flit,
Thin paper spirits, to and fro
And mow the wind, when it

Demanded of them reverence
And passed with twirl or twit.

What music, too, of samisen
And koto I should hear!
Tinkle on weirder tinkle thro
The strangely wistful ear
What shadows on the shoji-door
Of my dim soul should veer
All night in sleep, and haunt the light
Of many a coming year!

IV

Or were I in Japan today,
From Ujina I'd sail
For mountain-isled Miyajima
Upon the distance, frail
As the mirage, to Amida,
Of this world's transient tale,

Where he sits clothed in boundless light
And sees it vainly ail.

Up to the great sea-torii,
Its temple-gate, I'd wind,
There furl my sail beneath its beam;
And soon my soul should find
What it shall never, tho it sift
The world elsewhere, and blind
Itself at last with sight of all
Earth's blisses to mankind.

"Miyajima! Miyajima!"
How would enchantment chant
The syllables within me, till
Desire should cease and pant
Of passion press no more my will—
But let charmed peace supplant
All thought of birth and death and birth—
Yea, karma turn askant.

For on Miyajima none may
  Give birth and none may die—
Since birth and death are equal sins
  Unto the wise. So I
Should muse all day where the sea spills
  Its murmur softly by
The still stone lanterns all arow
  Under the deathless sky.

And under cryptomeria-tree
  And camphor-tree and pine,
And tall pagoda, rising roof
  On roof into the shine
Of the pure air—red roof on roof,
  With memories in each line
Of far Confucian China where
  They first were held divine.

And o'er Miyajima the moon
  Should rise for me again.

So magical its glow, I dare
  Think of it only when
My heart is strong to shun the snare
  Of witcheries that men
May lose their souls in evermore,
  Nor, after, care nor ken.

v

Yes, were I in Japan today
  These things I'd do, and more.
For Ïse gleams in royal groves,
  And Nara with its lore,
And Nikko hid in mountains—where
  The Shogun, great of yore,
Built timeless tombs whose glory glooms
  Funereally o'er.

These things I'd do! But last of all,
  On Kamakura's lea,

I'd seek Daibutsu's face of calm
And still the final sea
Of all the West within me—from
Its fret and fever free
My spirit—into patience, peace,
And passion's mastery.

THE YOUNG TO THE OLD

You who are old—
And have fought the fight—
And have won or lost or left the field—
Weigh us not down
With fears of the world, as we run!
With the wisdom that is too right,
The warning to which we cannot yield,
The shadow that follows the sun,
Follows forever!
And with all that desire must leave undone,
Though as a god it endeavor;
Weigh, weigh us not down!

But gird our hope to believe—
That all that is done

Is done by dream and daring—
Bid us dream on!
That Earth was not born
Or Heaven built of bewaring—
Yield us the dawn!
You dreamt your hour—and dared, but we
Would dream till all you despaired of *be*;
Would dare—till the world,
Won to a new wayfaring,
Be thence forever easier upward drawn!

OFF THE IRISH COAST

Gulls on the wind,
Crying! crying!
Are you the ghosts
Of Erin's dead?
Of the forlorn
Whose days went sighing
Ever for Beauty
That ever fled?

Ever for Light
That never kindled?
Ever for Song
No lips have sung?
Ever for Joy
That ever dwindled?
Ever for Love that stung?

A VISION OF VENUS AND ADONIS

I know not where it was I saw them sit,
For in my dreams I had outwandered far
That endless wanderer men call the sea—
Whose winds like incantations wrap the world
And help the moon in her high mysteries.
I know not how it was that I was led
Unto their tryst; or what dim infinite
Of perfect and imperishable night
Hung round, a radiance ineffable;
For I was too intoxicate and tranced
With beauty that I knew was very love.
So when divinity from her had stolen
Into his spirit, as, from fields of myrrh
Or forests of red sandal by the sea,
Steal slaking airs, and he began to speak,

I could but gather these few fleeting words:
"Your glance sends fragrance sweeter than the lily,
Your hands are visible bodiments of song.
You are the voice that April light has lost,
Her silence that was music of glad birds.
The wind's heart have you, and its mystery,
When poet Spring comes piping o'er the hills
To make of Tartarus forgotten fear.
Yea all the generations of the world,
Whose whence and whither but the gods shall know,
Are vassal to your vows forevermore."
And she, I knew, made answer, for her words
Fell warm as womanhood with wordless things,
But I had drifted on within my dream,
To that pale space which is oblivion.

SOMNAMBULISM

I

Night is above me,
And Night is above the night.
The sea is beside me soughing, or is still.
The earth as a somnambulist moves on
In a strange sleep . . .
A sea-bird cries.
And the cry wakes in me
Dim, dead sea-folk, my sires—
Who more than myself are me.
Who sat on their beach long nights ago and saw
The sea in its silence;
And cursed it or implored;
Or with the Cross defied;
Then on the morrow in their boats went down.

II

Night is above me . . .
And Night is above the night.
Rocks are about me, and, beyond, the sand . . .
And the low reluctant tide,
That rushes back to ebb a last farewell
To the flotsam borne so long upon its breast.
Rocks. . . . But the tide is out,
And the slime lies naked, like a thing ashamed
That has no hiding-place.
And the sea-bird hushes—
The bird and all far cries within my blood—
And earth as a somnambulist moves on.

SERENATA MAGICA

(*Venetian*)

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
  And glides beneath the moon.
Dark palaces beside me pass,
Like visions in a beryl-glass
Of what shall never be, alas,
  Or what has been too soon.
Like what shall never be, but in
  The breathing of a swoon.

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
  That makes a mystic way
From door to phantom water-door,
While carven balconies hang o'er

And casements framed for love say more
  Than love can ever say.
Say more than any voice but one
  Of silent magic may.

My gondola is a black sea-swan—
  Rialto lies behind.
And by me the Salute swings,
A loveliness that must take wings
And vanish, as imaginings
  Within an Afrit's mind;
As vague and vast imaginings
  That can no substance find.

My gondola is a black sea-swan:
  San Marco and the shaft
Of the slim Campanile steal
Into my trance and leave a seal
Upon my senses, like the feel
  Of long enchantment quaffed:

Of long enchantments such as songs
Of sage Al Raschid waft.

My gondola is a black sea-swan
And gains to the lagoon,
Where samphire and sea-lavender
Around me float or softly stir,
While far-off Venice still lifts her
Fair witchery to the moon,
And all that wonder e'er gave birth
Seems out of beauty hewn.

O-SHICHI AND MOTO

I

O-Shichi, all my heart today
Is dreaming of your fate;
And of your little house that stood
Beside the temple gate;
Of its plum-garden hid away
Behind white paper doors;
And of the young boy-priest who read too late with you love-lores.

II

O-Shichi dwelt in Yedo—where
A thousand wonders dwell,
Gods, golden palaces and shrines
That like a charm enspell.

O-Shichi dwelt among them there,
More wondrous, she, than all—
A flower some forgetful god had from his hand
let fall.

III

And all her days were as the dream
On flowers in the sun.
And all her ways were as the waves
That by Shin-bashi run.
And in her gaze there was the gleam
Of stars that cannot wait
Too long for love and so fare forth from heaven
to find a mate.

IV

O-Shichi dwelt so, till one night
When all the city slept,
When not a paper lantern swung,

When only fire-flies swept
Soft cipherings of spirit-light
Across the temple's gloom—
Sudden a cry was heard—the cry that should
O-Shichi doom.

V

For following the cry came flame,
A Chaya's roof a-blaze.
And quickly was the street a stream
Of stricken folk, whose gaze
Knew well that when the morning came
Their homes would be but smoke
Vanished upon the winds: now had O-Shichi's
fate awoke.

VI

And waited. For at morning priests
In pity of her years

And desolation led her back
Behind the great god's spheres;
The great god Buddha, who of beasts
And men all mindful was.
O Buddha, in thy very courts O-Shichi learned
love's laws!

VII

Love of the body and the soul,
Not of Nirvana's state!
Love that beyond itself can see
No beauty wise or great.
O-Shichi for a moon—a whole
Moon happy there beheld
The young boy-priest whose yearning e'er into his
eyes upwelled.

VIII

So all too soon for her was found
Elsewhere a kindly thatch.

And all too soon O-Shichi heard
Behind her close love's latch.
They led her from the temple's ground
Into untrysting days.
And all too soon that happy moon was hid in sorrow's haze.

IX

For now at dawn she rose to dress
With blooms some honored vase,
Or to embroider or brew tea's
Sweet ceremonial grace.
Or she at dusk, in sick distress,
Before the butsudan,
Must to ancestral tablets pray—not to her Moto-San!

X

Not unto him, her love, who sways
Her breast, as moon the tide,

Whose breath is incense—Ah, again
To see him softly glide
Before the grave god-idol's gaze
Of inward ecstasy,
To watch the great bell boom for him its mystic
sutra-plea.

XI

But weeks grew into weariness,
And weariness to pain,
And pain to lonely wildness, which
Set fire unto her brain.
And, "I will see my love!" distress
Made fair O-Shichi cry,
"Tho for ten lives away from him I then must live
and die."

XII

Yet—no! She dared not go to him,
To her he could not come.

Then, sudden a thought her being swept
And struck her loud heart dumb.
Till in her rose confusion dim,
Fear fighting with Desire—
Which to O-Shichi took the shape of Fudo, god of fire.

XIII

And Fudo won her: for that night
Did fond O-Shichi dare
To set aflame her father's house,
Hoping again to share
The temple with her acolyte,
Her lover-priest, who, spent
With speechless passion for her face, in vain strove to repent.

XIV

But ah! what destiny can do
Is not for folly's hand.

The flames O-Shichi kindled were
From sea to Shiba fanned.
And it was learned a love-sick girl
Had charred a thousand homes.
Then were the fury-smitten folk like to a sea that foams.

XV

And so they seized her: but not in
The temple—O not there
Had she been led again by priests
In pity—led to share
Her lover's eyes; no, but her sin
Brought not one dear delight
To poor O-Shichi—who was now to look on her last rite.

XVI

For to the stake they bound her—fire
They lit—to be her fate. . . .

O-Shichi, have I dreamt it all?
Your face, the temple gate,
The fair boy-priest shut from desire
In Buddhahood to-be?
Then let me dream and ever dream, O flower by
Yedo's sea.

A PRAYER

One cricket left, of summer's choir.
One glow-worm, flashing life's last fire.
One frog with leathern croak
Beneath the oak,—
And the pool stands leaden
Where November twilights deaden
Day's unspent desire.

One star in heaven—East or West.
One wind—a gypsy seeking rest.
One prayer within my heart—
For all who part—
That on some portal,
God may join at last, immortal,
All who keep love's quest.

THE INFINITE'S QUEST

All night the rain
And the wind that beat
Dull wings of pain
On the seas without.
All night a Voice
That broke in my brain
And blew blind thoughts about.

All night they whirled
As a haunted throng
From some dim world
Where there is no rest.
All night the rain,
And the wind that swirled,
And the Infinite's lone quest.

LAD AND LASS

I heard the buds open their lips and whisper,
Whisper,
"Spring is here!"
The robins listened
And sang it loud.
The blue-birds came
In a fluttering crowd.
The cardinal preached
It high and proud,
Spring!

And thro the warm earth their song went trilling,
Trilling,
"Wake! Arise!"
The kingcups quickly

Assembled, strong.
The bluets stept
From the moss in throng.
Like fairies too
Came the cress along.
Spring!

And love in your breast, my lass, awaking—
Waking,
Love was born!
Your eyes were kindled,
Your lips were warm,
Wild beauties broke
From your face and form.
And all my heart
Was a heaven-storm,
Was Spring!

AT STRATFORD

I could not sleep. The wind poured in my ear
Immortal names—Lear, Hamlet, Hal, Macbeth,
And thro the night I heard the rushing breath
Of ghost and witch and fool go whirling by.
I followed them, under the phantom sphere
Of the pale moon, along the Avon's near
And nimbused flowing, followed to his bier—
Who had evoked them first with mighty eye.
And as I gazed upon the peaceful spire
That points above earth's most immortal dust,
I could have asked God for His starry Lyre
Out of the skies to play my praise upon.
I could have shouted, as, O Wind, thou must,
"Here lies Humanity: kneel, and pass on."

THE IMAGE PAINTER

Up under the roof, in cold or heat,
Far up, aloof from the city street,
She sat all day
With brush and clay,
And painted, sadly human.
And if she thought of ease and rest,
Of love that spells God's name the best,
Her few friends heard but one request—
"Pray for a tired little woman."

She sat from dawn till weary dusk.
Her hands plied on—with but a husk—
But one, to break
And for Christ's sake
To eat: was *He* not human?

Then when the light would leave her brush
She'd sit there still, in the dim hush,
And say aloud, lest tears should rush—
" Pray for a tired little woman."

They found her so—one morning when
A knock brought no sweet welcome ken
Of her still face
And cloistral grace
And brow so bravely human.
They found her by the window bar,
Her eyes fixed where had been some star.
O you that rest, where'er you are,
Pray for the tired little woman.

WANDA

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;"

I'm Wanda born
Of the mirthful morn
So I heard the red-buds whisper
To the forest beech,
Tho I know that each
Is but a gossipy lisper.

I taunt the brook
With his hair outshook
O'er the weir so cool and mossy,

And mock the crow
As he peers below
With a caw that's vain and saucy.

Where the wahoo reds
And the sumac spreads
Tall plumes o'er the purple privet,
I beg a kiss
Of the wind, tho I wis
Right well he never will give it.

I hide in the nook
And sunbeams look
For me everywhere, like fairies.
Then out I glide
By the gray deer's side—
Ha, ha, but he never tarries!

Then I fright the hare
From his turfy lair
And after him send a volley
Of song that stops
Him under the copse
In wonderment at my folly.

And Autumn cries
"Be sad!" or sighs
Thro her nun lips palely pouting.
But then I leap
To the woods and keep
It wild with gleeing and shouting.

And when the sun
Has almost spun
A path to his far Golconda,
I climb the hill
And listen, still,
While he calls me—"Wanda! Wanda!"

And then I go
To the valley—Oh,
My dreams are sweeter than dreaming!
All night I play
Over lands of Fay,
In delight that seems not seeming.

IN A STORM

(*To a Petrel*)

All day long in the spindrift swinging,
Bird of the sea! bird of the sea!
How I would that I had thy winging—
How I envy thee!

How I would that I had thy spirit,
So to careen, joyous to cry,
Over the storm and never fear it!
Into the night that hovers near it!
Calm on a reeling sky!

All day long, and the night, unresting!
Ah! I believe thy every breath
Means that Life's Best comes ever breasting
Peril and pain and death!

ANTAGONISTS

I

Life flung to Art this voice, of mercy bare,
" Fool, to my human earth come you, so free,
To wreathe with phantom immortality
Whoever climbs with passionate lone care
That shifting, feverous and shadow stair
To Beauty—which is vainer than the sea
On furious thirst, or than a mote to Me
Who fill yon infinite great Everywhere?
Let them alone—my children! they are born
To mart and soil and saving commerce o'er
Wind, wave and many-fruited continents.
And you can feed them but of crumbs and scorn,
And futile glory when they are no more.
Within my hand alone is recompense!"

II

But Art made fierce reply, " Anathema,
On you who fill flesh but the spirit scorn.
Who give it to the unrequiting law
Of your brute soullessness and heart unborn
To aught than barter in your low bazaar—
Though Beauty die for it from star to star.
You are the god of Judas and those who
Betrayed Him unto nail and thorn and sword!
Of that relentless worm-bit Florence horde
Who drove lone Dante from them till he grew
So great in death they begged his bones to strew
Their pride and wealth and useless praise upon.
Anathema! I cry; and will, till none
Of all earth's children still shall worship you."

SEEDS

A thousand years
In a mummy's hand
A seed may lie,
Then, planted, spring
Into life again
Under sun and sky.

A thousand days
In a soul's dark ways
A word may wait.
But a touch at length
May arouse its strength
And the word proves—Fate.

THE SOUL'S RETURN

Let me lie here—
I care not for the distant hills today,
And the blue sphere
Of far infinity that draws away
All to its deep,
Would only sweep
Soothing the farther from me with its sway.

Let me lie here—
Gazing with vacant sadness on this weed.
The cricket near
Will utter all my heart can bear to heed.
Another sound
Would but confound
Still more my life's bewilderment and need.

Let me lie here:
For now, so long my wasted soul has tossed
On the wide Mere
Of Mystery Hope's wing alone has crossed,
I ask no more
Than to restore
To simple things the wonder they have lost.

ROMANCE

(*To A. H. R. on North Cliff, Lynton, Devon*)

White-caps hurry to meet the shore
An hundred fathoms down.
Gray sails are shimmering on the wind
Far out from Lynmouth town.

High crags above us are whisp'ring keen,
The heather and the ling
Laugh to the sky as driven by
The wild gulls cry or cling.

And, where the far sun like a god
Scatters the mist, lies Shore.
Is it Romance's magic realm
Spring reigns forever o'er?

Romance that our morning hearts could see
Across the darkest foam?
Then do we know it well, my love,
Because it is our Home.

ON THE ATLANTIC

(To A. H. R.)

Who stood upon that schooner's driven deck
Last night as reefed and shuddering she hove
Into the twilight and all desperate drove
From wave to angrier wave that sought her wreck?
Who labored at her helm and watched the wind
Stagger the sea with all his stunning might,
Until in dimness dwindling from our sight
She vanished in the wrack that rode behind?
We know not, you and I, but our two souls
That followed as storm-petrels o'er the waves
Felt all the might of Him who sinks or saves,
And all the pity of earth's unreached goals.
Felt all—then swift returning to our love
Dwelt in its peace, uplifted safe above.

THE GREAT BUDDHA OF KAMAKURA

TO THE SPHINX

Grave brother of the burning sands,
Whose eyes enshrine forever
The desert's soul, are you not worn
Of gazing outward to dim strands
Of stars that weary never?

Infinity no answer has
For Time's untold distresses.
Its deepest maze of mystery
Is but Illusion built up as
The blind build skies—with guesses.

Nor has Eternity a place
On any starry summit.

The winds of Death are wide as Life,
And leave no world untouched—but race,
And soon with Night benumb it.

And Karma is the law of soul
And star—yea, of all Being.
And from it but one way there is,
Retreat into that trancèd Whole—
Which is not Sight nor Seeing;

Which is not Mind nor Mindlessness,
Nor Deed nor driven Doer,
Nor Want nor Wasting of Desire;
But only that which won can bless;
And of all else is pure.

Turn then your eyes from the far track
Of worlds, and gazing inward,
O brother, fare where Life has come,
Yea, into its far Whence fare back.
All other ways are sinward.

A NIKKO SHRINE

Under the sway, in old Japan,
  Of silent cryptic trees,
There is a shrine the worldliest
  Would near with bended knees.

Green, thro a torii, the way
  Leads to it, worn, across
A rivulet whose voice intones
  With mystery of moss.

A mystery that is everywhere:
  The god beneath his shrine
Seems but a mossy shape—yet so
  Ensheathed is more divine.

For tho Nature has muffled him
And sealed him there away,
The meaning of all faith remains—
That men will ever pray.

Aye, and as long as sore-distressed
Will kneel on any sod,
Or at the lowliest of shrines
That waken in them God.

THE QUESTION

I shall lie so one day,
With lips of Silence set;
Eyes that no tear can wet
Again: a thing of Clay.

I shall lie so, and Earth
Will seize again her dust—
Though she must gnaw and rust
The coffin's iron girth.

I shall lie so—and they
Who still the Day bestride,
Will stand so by my side
And with sad yearning say:

"What is he now, this man,
Shut in a pallor there,
His spirit that could dare,
What—what now is its span?

"A withered atom's space
Within a withered brain?
Or can it from the Wain
To far Orion race?"

And, like all that have died,
I shall but answer—naught.
Yet Time this truth has taught:
The Question—will abide.

I'LL LOOK NO MORE

I'll look no more! thro timeless hours my eyes
Without intent have watched the slowing flight
Of ebon crows across quiescent skies
Till all are gone; the last, a lonely bird,
Scudding to rest thro streams of golden curd
That flow far eastward to the coming night.
And as I turn again to foiling thought,
Beside the kindled lamp that seems to grieve,
My spirit leaves me as faint zephyrs leave
Each tree. Till, when the night comes, full-
enfraught
With silence, and the slow oil sinks beneath
The noiseless burning wick of yellow flame,
It is as if God back to him would breathe
All the world's given life, and end its Aim.

NIGHT'S OCCULTISM

Northward the twilight thro dark drifts
  Of cloud-wreck lingers cold.
Southward the sated lightning sinks
  Beneath the wooded wold.

Eastward immovable deep shade
  Is sealed with mystery.
Westward a memory of dead gold
  Wakes on a sunset sea.

Under, is earth's still orbiting;
  Over, a clearing star:
In all, the spirit litany
  Of life's strange avatar.

UNCROWNED

I am not other than men are, you say?
But faulty and failing? And your love can lend
No glory of illusion to o'erlay
The lack, and make me seem one in whom blend
Nobilities wherein your heart may lose
All that it feels of flaw in me, or rues?

Can it so be? Did ever woman love
Whose faith wreathed not about the brow she chose
Aureolas illuming him above
All that another thinks he is, or knows?
I ask it bravely, for the way is long,
And, haloless, should I not lead you wrong?

WRITTEN IN HELL

(*By Sir Giles, whom the Witch of Urm leads to Judas Iscariot*)

Against a castle moated gloomily by a bitter drain
of blood,
From whose fetid wave contumely
Of all truth was reeking fumily
And infectiously, I stood;
Waiting for her sign—
A shriek repeated nine.

I shrank at every aspish quivering fear set crawling
in my breast.
But betimes I felt a shivering,
As a shriek cut thro me slivering

All my soul with sin's unrest—
Christ! it raised the dead
Out of the moat's black bed.

Nine times—and then across the thickening reek a
rusty draw was dropped;
For her was it: and soon, quickening,
O'er she sped—a shadow sickening
All with horror as it stopped—
Stopped to laugh a laugh
No devil's soul could quaff.

I swear its clamor tore the stuttering leaves from
shrub and shrunken tree;
Swear no limbo e'er heard muttering
Like that spawn of echoes sputtering
Midnight with their drunken glee—
Yet, ere half were done,
I could not hear a one.

She put her finger burning eerily to my lips—I
heard them lock;
Led me then a march-way, cheerily—
Tho the quick ooze spurted drearily
Thro root-rotten curd and rock.
Things like water-ghouls
Slid slimily in pools.

She stepped just once upon a hideous burrow dank
and haired with grass;
Fixed upon me eyes perfidious
As a fiend's are, yet insidious—
Questioned if I dared to pass.
"I will search all Hell
To find him," from me fell.

And so was drawn thro dark cadaverous with the
sound of gabbling dead.
Oft we heard them hoot palaverous,
And beside us saw unsavorous

In the mould some glutton head
Grin to a hissing bat,
That scraped him as he spat.

And tho I knew her witch turned shepherdess to a
soul blind as a sheep's,
Still I dogged her on, as jeopardous
Sped she—like a leashless leopardess—
Down . . . till, mid miasmic deeps,
"Swim," she gasped behind—
And like a she-wolf whined.

It almost seemed to me a deadening as the sluice of
dreary Styx.
Fire and foulest slush soul-leadening
Did I drink, and swam leagues reddening
With my lunging weary licks.
Up a sulphurous bank
We climbed, and there I sank.

And then once more that laugh—a shrivelling,
ghastly, gaunt, uncanny spate.
Up I sprang and cursed my snivelling—
Cursed my weary soul for drivelling,
And for so forgetting Hate.
"You will find him there,"
She pointed, thro her hair.

I write these words from Hell where bloodily locked
with him in fight I woke.
Where we fall down gulphs spilt ruddily
With a glazing gore: or, muddily,
In mad night and horror choke.
Yet I do not care,
For he groans by me there.

AT THE HELM

(*Nova Scotian*)

Fog, and a wind that blows the sea
Blindly into my eyes.
And I know not if my soul shall be
When the day dies.

But if it be not and I lose
All that men live to gain—
I who have little known but hues
Of wind and rain—

Still I shall envy no man's lot,
For I have held this great,
Never in whines to have forgot
That Fate is Fate.

DEAD LOVE

If this should never end—
This wandering in oblivious mood
Along a rutless road that leads
From wood to deeper wood—
This crunching with unheedful foot
Acorns, I think, and withered leaves . .
Perhaps a rotten root—

If this should never end—
This seeing with insentient eyes
Something that seems like earth, and, too,
Like overbending skies;
This feeling, well—that time is space,
Space, time; and each a pallid glass
In which Life sees her face—

If it should never end—
The road, the wandering and the feel
Of dead infinities that seem
O'er our dead sense to steal,
And like seas cease above—
Would it much matter, love?

MORTAL SIN

(Song for a drama)

Much the wind
Knows of my heart,
Though he whispers in my ear
That he has seen me burn and start
When I dream of your breast, my dear.

Much the wind
Knows of my soul!
For no soul has he to lose
On a mistress who can dole
Kisses that drug as poison-dews.

SEA-MAD

(*A Breton Maid*)

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me!
One said:
"Away! he is dead!
Upon my foam I have flung his head!
Go back to your cote, you shall never wed!—
(Nor he!)"

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me.
Two brake.
The third with a quake
Cried loud, "O maid, I'll find for thy sake
His dead lost body: prepare his wake!"
(And back it plunged to the sea!)

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me.
One bore—
And swept on the shore—
His pale, pale face I shall kiss no more!
Ah, woe to women death passes o'er!
(Woe's me!)

WORMWOOD

(In Old England)

What is he whispering to her there
  Under the hedge-row spray?
"Spring, Spring, Spring?"—Is the world so fair
To him, fool, that he has no care
  As he cuckoos it all day?

Is he quite sure—quite sure the sap
  Of life's not hate, but love?
If I should tell him there's no gap
Between her and a . . . nameless hap,
  Would he still want his "dove"?

Or would he go as blind to buds
  As I am, who watch here.

While o'er her face a rapture scuds,
As he is pouring poet floods
Of passion in her ear?

It would be swords—swords! . . . And his steel
Should rip death from my breast.
But would he ever know the feel
Of Spring again, of its ribald reel,
As once *I* did, the best?

No! He would curse henceforward leaf
And flower and light—as I.
Spring?—It is fire, lust, ashes, grief—
All that is Hell's, in hope or fief! . . .
He'll learn it ere he die.

QUEST AND REQUITAL

I

(*Before He Comes*)

Sweet under swooning blue and mellow mist
September waves of forest overflow
The hills with crimson, amaranth and gold.
Winds warm with the memory of scented hours
Dead Summer gathers in her leafy lap,
Rustle the distance with dim murmurings
That sink upon the air as soft as shades
Dropt from the overleaning clouds to earth;
While golden-rod and sedge and aster hushed
In sunny silence and the oblivion
Of life drawn from the insentient veins of Time,
Await the searing swoon of Autumn's reign.
It is a day when death must seem as birth,
And birth as death; and life—till love comes—pain.

II

(*He Has Come*)

These are the leafy hills and listless vales
Of iridescent Autumn—this the oak
Against whose lichened bole at peace I leant
Thro the long sunny hours of afternoon.
Here are the bitter-sweet and elder sprays
I fingered, dreaming to the muted flow
Of breezes overhead—and here the word
I wrote unwittingly upon the soil.
How long ago it was I cannot tell:
The loneliness of unrequited love
Lies like a blank eternity between
Those hours and these I hear slip thro my heart.
I only know all days I've ever seen
Must seem now of some other life apart!

III

(*He Loves*)

"Will you let any moment dip its wing
Into your heart and find no love of me
To tint with deathless Dream"—he said—"and Spring,
Its flight to the dim bourne of memory?
Will you have any grief that can forget
How grief should find forgetfulness in love?
And since your soul in my soul's zone is set
Will it sometimes ask other spheres to rove
Where touch and voice of me shall not be met?
Ah no! in all the underdeeps of Death
Or overheights of Life it still shall be
At tryst with mine thro moan or ecstasy.
In all!" . . . Yet ere a year he'll draw no breath
But is another's!—Will God let it be?

IV

(*Betrayed by Him*)

All day I've bent my heart beneath the yoke
Of goading toil, remembering to forget,
To still upon my lips his kiss that woke
Me in elysian love one word has broke—
One stinging word of severance and regret.
All day I've blotted from my eyes his face,
But now at evening tide it comes again,
And memories into my darkened soul
Rush as the stars into high heaven's space.
As the bright stars! But, ah, tomorrow! when
Once more I must forget and see life's goal,
That was so green, with sering laurel hung.
Tomorrow and tomorrow! till is wrung
Peace from the piteous hours I strive among!

V

(*Finding No Peace*)

I say unto all hearts that cannot rest
For want of love, for beating loud and lonely,
Pray the great Mercy-God to give you only
Love that is passionless within the breast.
Pray that it may not be a haunting fire,
A vision that shall steal insatiably
All beauteous content, all sweet desire,
From faith and dream, star, flower, and song, and sea.
But seek that soul and soul may meet together
Knowing they have forever been but one—
Meet and be surest when ill's chartless weather
Drives blinding gales of doubt across their sun.
Pray—pray! lest what seemed love shall change and tether
You to aborrence past oblivion.

VI

(*In After Years to Him*)

You say that love then led us—you and me?
I say 'twas hate, that wore love's wanting eyes:
Hate that I could not tear away the lies
That wrapped you with their silken sorcery.
Hate that for you I could not open skies
Where beauty lives of her own loveliness;
That God would give me no omnipotence
To purge and mould anew your soul's numb sense.
Aye, hate that I could love you not tho love
Pent in me ached with passion-born distress—
While thro unfathomable dark the Prize
Seemed sinking, as my soul, from heaven above.
Love, say you? love? and hate rent us apart?
I tell you hate alone so tears the heart.

VII

(To Him After His Death)

God who can bind the stars eternally
With but a breath of spirit speech, a thought;
Who can within earth's arms lay the mad sea
Unseverably, and count it as sheer naught;
With his All-might could bind not you and me.
For tho He pressed us heart to burning heart
And sanctioned, as it seemed, our passion's all,
Still did our souls unblending stand apart
As aliens beating fierce against the wall
Of dark unsympathies that would upstart.
Stand alien, aye! and would tho we should meet,
Beyond the oblivion of unnumbered births,
Upon some world where Time cannot repeat
The feeblest syllable that once was earth's.

LOVE IN EXTREMIS

I care not what they say who hold
We should speak but of life and joy;
I have met death in one I love,
Death lusting to destroy.

And I have fought him vein by vein,
Loosened his cold and creeping clutch,
Driven him from her—twice and thrice—
With might too much.

Yet with too little! for I know
That she at last will lie there still.
Then all my fire of love shall fail
To thaw that chill;

For it will freeze light from her eyes,
Pulse from her breast and from her soul
Me, whom no opiate of peace
Can e'er console.

None: . . . till I follow her, in time,
And find her, though all Dust deny!
With that to be I'll front the day,
And fronting die.

QUARREL

And is it so
That two who stand
Heart closed in heart,
Hand knit to hand,
Can let love go,
And, as its foe,
Strive thus, nor understand?

Does one ask much?
One give too small?
Till so is lost,
It may be—All?
For but a touch
Of pride shall such
A heaven be let fall?

No!—But to Fate
Say with me, "Go:
Death may bring dross
But this I know;
Love can abate
Life's harshest hate,
So loving I bend low."

OF THE FLESH

(*At Monte Carlo*)

We met upon the street;
Quick passion sprung into the eye of each;
No dilettante heat!
For tho no more I love her—or beseech
God for her—do you think
We once again could face, signor, nor fear
To leap the fatal brink
And clasp each other—tho Hell hung a-near?

No, no! Such love as ours
Stabbed peace heart-deep and burnt the flesh to mad.
It scorned the simple powers
Of sympathy and mild repose, and had

One thirst alone—to hold
Each other mouth to still unsated mouth
Until, perchance, the cold
And damp of death should end some night its drouth.

But that cold would not come—
Day only would—to show us duty's eye
Calm, pale, and sternly dumb.
And so we'd swear never to kiss or sigh
Again—for well we knew
God grants such boons only to man and wife.
But night distilled the dew
Of loneliness—and so, once more, that life.

And how was the spell burst?
Each long embrace seemed sweeter than the last;
Each dulling heart-beat nurst
The shame, till . . . well, I tore me from the past,

And cried, "I hate my soul,
And thine and this false love!" . . . whereon she
fell.
And so I kissed her . . . stole
The ring that choked her finger . . . said farewell.

And since then Time has pressed
Ten restless years. But if I saw her lay
Her hand upon her breast,
As once she used, and send her soul to say
A word with those dark eyes . . .
Ha, what is that, signor? "Respect? . . . My
wife?"
That's as may be. You rise?
Adieu, signor. Fate deals the cards in life.

A DEATH SONG

(*For a Drama*)

Toll no bell and say no prayer,
Let no rose die on my bier.
All I hoped for shall appear
Or be well forgotten, there.
(Like the waves of yesteryear.)

Toll no bell and drop no sigh,
Bear me softly to the tomb;
Life was dark, but light is nigh—
Light no sorrow shall consume
(And no kiss of love—or cry).

Toll no bell; the clod will toll
Grief enough for any ear.
When the last has sounded clear,
Know that I have reached the Goal
(Which is God seen thro no tear).

ON BALLYTEIGUE BAY

I've heard the sea-dead three nights come keening
And crying to my door.
Why will they affright me with their threening
Forevermore!
O have they no grave in the salt sea-places
To lay them in?
Do they know, do they know—with their cold dead faces!—
Know . . . my sin?

There's blood on my soul. The Lord cannot wipe it
Away with His own blood.
I've beaten my breast with blows that stripe it,
And burned His Rood

With kisses that shrivel my lips—that shrivel
To sin on the air.
But the night and the storm cry on me evil.
Does He not care?

There's blood on my soul: but then . . . she should never
Have said it was *his*—the child—
And *hers*—for she knew I'd never forgive her . . .
I grew so wild
There was just one thing to be done—to kill her:
Just one—no more.
I took the keen steel . . . one stroke would still her . . .
I counted four.

And she fell—fell down on the kelp—none near her.
But when she lay so fair
I kissed her . . . because I knew I should fear her,
And smoothed her hair;

And shut her two eyes that fixed me fearless
Of death and pain.
And the blood on my hand I wiped off tearless—
And that on my brain.

And I buried her quickly. The thorn-trees cover
Her grave with spines. I pray
That each in its fall will prick her and shove her
To colder clay.
But . . . yonder! . . . she's up! and moans in the heather
A whimpering thing!
I'll bury her deeper in Autumn weather . . .
Or Winter . . . or Spring.

And then if she comes with them still to call me
Each night, I'll tell her loud
He was mine! and laugh when they try to pall me
With sea and shroud.

And I'll swear not to care for Christ or Devil.
They'll skitter back
To the waves, at that, and be gone with their revel. . . .
God spare me the rack!

NIGHT-RIDERS[1]

See them mount in the dead of night—
Men, three hundred strong!
Armed and silent, masked from the light,
Speeding swartly along.
What is their errand? manly fight?
Clench with a manly foe?
I would rather be dead of wrong
Than ride among them so.

See them enter the sleeping town.
Hear the warning shot!
Keep to your beds, free men—down, down!
Dare you to move?—dare not!

[1] This clan of tobacco outlaws in Kentucky during 1907–1908 cast such disgrace on her good name as years will not suffice to erase.

These are your masters—these who crown
Black Anarchy their king!
I would rather my hand should rot
Than have it do this thing.

See them steal to the house they seek—
Brave men, O, brave all!
There lies a sick boy, fever-weak;
Who comes forth at call?
A woman? "Go in, you bitch!" they reek.
"Give us the old man out!"
Rather my bitten tongue should fall
To palsy than so shout.

And—they have him, "the old man," now,
Bound—with nine beside.
One, a Judge of the Law's grave brow,
Sworn by it to bide.
"Lash him!"—a hundred lashes plow
A free-born back with pain!

God, shall we let such cowards ride
And burn and beat and stain?

O the shame, and the bitter shame,
That thus, across our land,
Crime can arise and write her name
Broad, with a bloody hand!
O the shame, and the bitter shame
Upon our chivalry.
I would rather have led the band
That diced on Calvary.

So, Night-errants, ride on and ride—
Avenging, wrongly, wrong.
But when the children at your side
Grow lawless up and strong;
When at their drunken hands you've died
As beasts beside your door,
You will repent, God knows it—long,
These nights to Hell made o'er.

HONOR

(*To the Night-Riders Who Murdered Hedges*)

Honor to men
Who leave their homes
  And children safe asleep,
To take the cover of night and fright
  Women that wake and weep!
Honor, again,
To those who mount
  For blood—hounds in a pack!
But let us honor the most of all—
  Men that shoot in the back!

For, it is good
To fare a-field
  And frighten helpless things,

And how good with a torch to scorch
A poor man's harvestings.
But, if you would
Do something high
And blameless, brave not black,
Ride till you find a peaceful man—
Then shoot—shoot in the back!

Why, there was one
In Palestine
Who gave a certain kiss.
More, fine friends, do you give who live
In a land not far from this!
For wrongs *he* had done
He hanged himself—
Shame made a sick heart crack.
But you will muster and ride again—
And shoot—shoot in the back!

Oh, and you may!
But wait, the Day

Shall come—in wrath shall come!
The Sovereign Law that you flaunt and
daunt,
Will not lie always dumb!
Her prisons gray
They are slow, but wide;
When they open, you will lack
Many a thing—but most, fair friends,
The chance to shoot in the back!

BRUDE[1]

(*A Dramatic Fantasy*)

Dealing with:

Boadicea, queen of the Britons.
Lamora, a Gaulish captive.
Brude, a Druid.
Cormo, a warrior.
Corlun, Druid high-priest,
and
Horma, a wandering hag.

SCENE: *A Hall of hewn wood, on the island of Mona, in which* BOADICEA *sits enthroned and attended. On her right, warriors, long-haired,*

[1] This sketch, written in 1898, was in no sense conceived for the stage.

mustached and painted with woad. On the left, a band of Druids robed in white: among them BRUDE, *whom she watches jealously from time to time. On the floor in front of her cringes* LAMORA, *held by* CORMO.

Boadicea. Britons, hear!
Ye know how my lord,
Caerleon's liege,
Swore feal to the Romans
His lorn wife and daughters—
When the wolf, Death,
Gnawed life from his heart.
Ye know how the Roman,
Ravenous traitor,
Slaves us with thongs
Of brutal behest.
Will ye still daunt
Your necks to the noose?

All. No! no! Queen! no, no, no!

Boadicea. Then, warriors of iron,

Sworded with terror,
Fly to your henges!
Fight till ye crowd
Hell with the ghosts
Of ethlings that Britons hate.

Warriors. To the slaughter! Hro! to the slaughter!

[*They rush from the hall in haste.*

Boadicea (*continuing*). And ye, Druid seers,
Heard by the gods,
Feared by the fiends,
Ye must away!
To your dark fane,
The gaunt oak-forest
Holy with mistle!
White-robed as spirits,
Gold knives uplifting,
Sing to the serpents,
Seek the Charmed Egg!

Druids (*bowing with weird signs*). Great is the Queen.

Her Druids hear.

But shall no gift be made?

Boadicea. Yea . . . since Lactantius,

God more than all gods,

Will not be soothed

By sheep or cattle,

On your high altar

Slay ye this maiden of Gaul!

[*Points to* LAMORA, *who cries out to her*! *then to* BRUDE:

Lamora. Nay, Queen, O pity!

O, Brude, win pity!

Let her not yield me

Prey to the gods.

Rather in battle

'Gainst the hard Roman

Would I be trampled

Into the grave.

Trampled by war-hoofs . . .
Into a grave of blood!

Boadicea. Proud-lip! mocker!
Dare you sputter
Shame on the awful gods?

[*Strikes her down . . .* BRUDE *watches helpless.*

Corlun (*coming forward*). Kneel, Druids, kneel!
Then bear her away!
Meet me at midnight,
Druids' day,
Deep within Mona's wood.

[*They kneel, then go, bearing* LAMORA.

SCENE II: *Sunset. A rocky cave near the forest.* BRUDE *pacing back and forth with restless muttering.*

Brude. O thou Lactantius,
Whom other gods

Worship with trembling,
While their star-chariots
Roll to the sea!
Symbolled by circles,
Endless in being,
Dost thou love life-blood
As Druids say?
When the white maiden's
Pierced on the altar
Dost thou drink praises
From her wide wound?
So teach the seers,
So did I, Brude, swear—
Till I saw Lamora!
Her eyes are love-fires,
Her words are sorcery
Stronger than god-laws!
But . . . who comes hither?

[*Has heard a moan.*

Hither harasser
Of these my thoughts?

Ha! is it Lamora
Followed by Cormo?
Curses like vampires
Fall on his head!

[*Steps aside.*

Lamora (*entering in despair*). Mother! sweet
mother,
Far in the Eastland,
Soon must thy daughter
Pass from earth's day!
Ne'er shall a boy-babe
Suck from her bosom
Valor to strangle
Wolves in the lair!
Never shall husband
From the red war-fields
Bring her the foeman's spoils!

Cormo (*behind her*). Lamora, proud one—

Lamora. Leave me, viper!
Stand from me farther!

Will you e'en now
With tongue spit poison
On my last ebbing hour?

Cormo. Nay, maiden, cruel,
But I will aid thee.
Words are as smoke,
Deeds as flame!
Hear! I will save thee
From Druid talons
And bear thee whither thou wilt:
Give but thy vow to wed me!

Lamora. Wed thee?—thee? . . .
Never—while cliffs
O'er the plain jutting
Plight void death to the leaper!
Never while waves
Curl gray lips
Yearning to gulf the doomed!

Cormo. Then thou shalt die! shalt die!
Druids shall gash

Streamings of life
Out of thy shrinking sides!

Lamora. Then die I will! . . .
But not thro fear,
Coward of Britons,
Will I e'er mother
Child of thy loins.
Rather let flames,
Tongues of the gods,
Suck the red life from my breast.
Yea, let the gods,
Glutless as men,
And, as women,
Treacherous, vain—
Strike, at the call of thy Queen!

[*Goes, followed by* Cormo.

Brude (*coming forward*). No! thou shalt live, live, live!

[*Goes into cave, then comes forth with a knife.*

SCENE III: *Midnight. A stormy glade in the forest. On one side a cromlech whereon* LAMORA *lies bound:* CORLUN *beside her with an uplifted blade of gold. On the other side Druids—around a pot of serpents over a fire in the cavern of an uprooted tree.*

[BRUDE *is among them, watchful.*

Corlun (*chanting*). Orpo!—Ai!—
Now shall the Roman
Backward be driven,
O gods!
Orpo!—Ai!—
For to the death stroke
Lamora's given,
O gods!
Orpo! Ai!—
Her skyward soul
Thro the dank dark shall rise,
As the morn's sun

Unto your halls
Far o'er the skies.
And she shall say
Thus Druids crave
Help of the helpers of men.

Druids (*incanting around the cavern*). Orpo!—
Ai!—
Serpents are spawned
Of devils' spit,
O gods!
Orpo!—Ai!—
Spit boiled with blood
In caverns lit
By fungous fangs
From Mona's wood.

[*They circle.* BRUDE *steals behind* CORLUN.

Orpo!—Ai!—
Serpents are spawned
In magic broth
To coil and wriggle,

Writhe and twist;
Till their froth
Becomes a mist,
Till the mist
An egg shall form—
Charm that Druids prize.

Brude (*with a sudden cry*). Corlun, the gods
Wait for thy soul!

[*Slays him.*

Lamora, fly!
With me, fly—
Thro the black forest!

[*Has cut her bonds.*

Great Lactantius,
Maker of gods,
Loves *not* the maiden's death-cry!

[*They escape.*

Druids (*in terror*). Corlun is slain!
Corlun! slain!
Woe to the Druids!

Woe from the heavens!
Woe from the ireful Queen!

[*They pursue confusedly.*

SCENE IV: *Dawn; far in the forest. Enter* BRUDE *and* LAMORA *faintingly to a spot where* HORMA, *the hag, unseen by them is gathering herbs.*

Lamora. Strength no more
Wings me for flight.
With hunger of sleep I faint.

[*Falls.*

Brude (*sinking by her*). Yet ere thy sleep,
Maid like the dawn,
List to my heart's wild uttering!
All I have dared
Was for thy love—
Tho but to love thee
Would I dare all!

Lamora. Ah! What is love,
Brude wise and noble?

Is it this burning
Far in my breast
Melting my soul to thine?
Is it this power
Hid in my eyes
Shaping thy face
On hill and cloud?
Is it this whisper,
As of sea-waves,
Singing thy name to me?
Yea! So now we may sleep.

[*They lie down.* HORMA, *the hag, who has heard them, creeps maundering up and gazes at them.*

Horma. Owl and eaglet?
Have they fled?
Then let witch-toads sing!
Oaths forgotten,
Would they wed?
Then let bull-bats,

Wild a-wing,
Flap the moon from heaven!
Deep in the forest—
Ha! ho! ho!

[*Breaks off, hearing shouts. Continues.*

They'll be slain!

[*Fleeing.*

They'll be slain!

Brude (*waking*). What was my dream? . . .

[*Hears the shouts.*

Lamora! Lamora!

[*They start up and look at each other. Silence.*

Lamora (*at length*). So was it doomed.
Now we must cross
Thro the death-fog
Unto the blest.

But side by side,
And ere they come.
[*Hands him her knife.*
Here we shall die.
But in the Meadows
Where the thin shades
Wander and wander,
Ever in love we'll live!
Fold first thy arms around me.
[*They embrace.*

Brude (*starting from her*). Hear! they have come—
Cormo! The Queen! . . .

Lamora. Then strike! for thy face
Alone would I see in death!

Brude (*killing her then himself*). Cormo! . . . Queen! . . . Death!
Ye shall never . . . tear us apart!

[*Falls with her in his arms, as* BOADICEA *and warriors enter.*

Boadicea (*seeing them*). Dead! . . . Leave
them, food
For beast and bird!
Leave them! away! away!

[*All go with pride and spurning.*

SONG-SURF

First Published 1900

To
MY SISTERS

WITH OMAR

I SAT with Omar by the Tavern door,
Musing the mystery of mortals o'er,
And soon with answers alternate we strove
Whether, beyond death, Life hath any shore.

"*Come, fill the cup*," *said he.* "*In the fire of Spring*
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling.
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter — and the Bird is on the Wing."

"The Bird of Time?" I answered. "Then have I
No heart for Wine. Must we not cross the Sky
Unto Eternity upon his wings —
Or, failing, fall into the Gulf and die?"

"Ay; so, for the Glories of this World sigh some,
As now, for the Prophet's Paradise to come,
You sigh. Take, Friend, the Cash — the Credit leave,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!"

"And, having taken, spend — without a throe —
All on the Wine? spend all? The while I know
A possible To-morrow may bring thirst
For Drink but Credit then shall cause to flow?"

"Yea, make the most of what you yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!"

"Into the Dust we shall descend — we must.
But can the soul not break the crumbling Crust
In which he is encaged? To hope or to
Despair he will — which is more wise or just?"

"*The worldly hope men set their hearts upon*
Turns Ashes — or it prospers: and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two — is gone."

"Like Snow it comes — to cool one burning Day;
And like it goes — for all our plea or sway.
But flooding tears nor Wine can ever purge
The Vision it has brought to us away."

"*But to this world we come and Why not knowing,*
Nor Whence, like water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the waste,
We know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing."

"True, little do we know of *Why* or *Whence.*
But is forsooth our Darkness evidence
There is no Light? — the worm may see no star
Tho' heaven with myriad multitudes be dense."

"But, all unasked, we're hither hurried Whence?
And, all unasked, we're Whither hurried hence?
O, many a cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence."

"Yet can not — ever! For it is forbid
Still by that quenchless Soul within us hid,
Which cries, 'Feed — feed me not on Wine alone,
For to Immortal Banquets I am bid.'"

"Well oft I think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled:
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her lap from some once lovely Head."

"Then if, from the dull Clay thro' with Life's throes,
More beautiful spring Hyacinth and Rose,
Will the great Gardener for the uprooted soul
Find Use no sweeter than — useless Repose?"

"We cannot know — so fill the cup that clears
To-day of past regret and future fears:
To-morrow! — Why, To-morrow we may be
Ourselves with Yesterday's sev'n thousand Years."

"No Cup there is to bring oblivion
More during than Regret and Fear — no, none!
For Wine that's Wine to-day may change and be
Marah before to-morrow's Sands have run."

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door where in I went."

"The doors of Argument may lead Nowhither,
Reason become a Prison where may wither
From sunless eyes the Infinite, from hearts
All Hope, when their sojourn too long is thither."

"Up from Earth's Centre thro' the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravelled by the Road —
But not the Master-knot of Human fate."

"The Master-knot knows but the Master-hand
That scattered Saturn and his countless Band
Like seeds upon the unplanted heaven's Air:
The Truth we reap from them is Chaff thrice fanned."

"Yet if the Soul can fling the Dust aside
And naked on the air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a shame — wer't not a shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?"

"No, for a day bound in this Dust may teach
More of the Sáki's Mind than we can reach
Through æons mounting still from Sky to Sky —
May open through all Mystery a breach."

"You speak as if Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has poured
Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour."

"Bubbles we are, pricked by the point of Death.
But, in each bubble, may there be no Breath
That lifts it and at last to Freedom flies,
And o'er all heights of Heaven wandereth?"

"A moment's halt — a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste —
And Lo — the phantom Caravan has reached
The Nothing it set out from — Oh, make haste!"

"And yet it should be — it should be that we
Who drink shall drink of Immortality.
The Master of the Well has much to spare:
Will He say, 'Taste' — then shall we no more be?"

"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it."

"And were it other, might we not erase
The Letter of some Sorrow in whose place
No truer sounding, we should fail to spell
The Heart which yearns behind the mock-world's Face?"

"Well, this I know; whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me, quite,
One flash of it within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright."

"In Temple or in Tavern 't may be lost.
And everywhere that Love hath any Cost
It may be found; the Wrath it seems is but
A Cloud whose Dew should make its power most."

"But see His Presence thro' Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all — but He remains."

"All — it may be. Yet lie to sleep, and lo,
The soul seems quenched in Darkness — is it so?
Rather believe what seemeth not than seems
Of Death — until we know — *until we know.*"

"So wastes the Hour — gone in the vain pursuit
Of This and That we strive o'er and dispute.
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit."

"Better — unless we hope that grief is thrown
Across our Path by urgence of the Unknown,
Lest we may think we have no more to live
And bide content with dim-lit Earth alone."

"Then, strange, is't not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too?"

"Such is the Ban! but even though we heard
Love in Life's All we still should crave the word
Of one returned. Yet none is *sure*, we know,
Though they lie deep, they are by Death deterred."

"Send then thy Soul through the Invisible
Some letter of the After-life to spell:
And by and by thy Soul returned to thee
But answers, 'I myself am Heaven and Hell.'"

"From the Invisible, he does. But sent
Thro' Earth, where living Goodness tho' 'tis blent
With Evil dures, may he not read the Voice,
'To make thee but for Death were toil ill spent'?"

"Well, when the Angel of the darker drink
At last shall find us by the river-brink
And offering his Cup invite our souls
Forth to our lips to quaff, we shall not shrink."

"No. But if in the sable Cup we knew
Death without waking were the wilful brew,
Nobler it were to curse as Coward Him
Who roused us into light — then light withdrew."

"Then Thou who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin."

"He will not. If one evil we endure
To ultimate Debasing, oh, be sure
'Tis not of Him predestined, and the sin
Not His nor ours — but Fate's He could not cure."

"Yet, ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that on the branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows?"

"So does it seem — no other joys like these!
Yet Summer comes, and Autumn's honoured ease;
And wintry Age, is't ever whisperless
Of that Last Spring, whose Verdure may not cease?"

"Still, would some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!"

"To otherwise enregister believe
He toils eternally, nor asks Reprieve.
And could Creation perfect from his hands
Have come at Dawn, none overmuch should grieve."

So till the wan and early scent of day
We strove, and silent turned at last away,
  Thinking how men in ages yet unborn
Would ask and answer — trust and doubt and pray.

JAEL

JEHOVAH! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods
of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou
dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is
breathen
His spirit — by night and by day come voices that
wait.

Athirst and affrightened he fled from the star-
wrought waters of Kishon.
His face was as wool when he swooned at the door
of my tent.
The Lord hath given him into the hand of per-
dition,

I smiled — but he saw not the face of my cunning
intent.

He thirsted for water: I fed him the curdless milk
of the cattle.
He lay in the tent under purple and crimson of
Tyre.
He slept and he dreamt of the surge and storming
of battle.
Ah ha! but he woke not to waken Jehovah's ire.

He slept as he were a chosen of Israel's God Al-
mighty.
A dog out of Canaan! — thought he I was woman
alone?
I slipt like an asp to his ear and laughed for the
sight he
Would give when the carrion kites should tear to his
bone.

I smote thro' his temple the nail, to the dust, a
worm, did I bind him.
My heart was a-leap with rage and a-quiver with
scorn.
And I danced with a holy delight before and behind
him —
I that am called blessèd o'er all unto Judah born.

"Aye, come, I will show thee, O Barak, a woman is
more than a warrior,"
I cried as I lifted the door wherein Sisera lay.
"To me did he fly and I shall be called his de-
stroyer —
I, Jael, who am subtle to find for the Lord a way!"

"Above all the daughters of men be blest — of
Gilèad or Asshur."
Sang Deborah, prophetess, then, from her waving
palm.

"Behold her, ye people, behold her the heathen's
abasher,
Behold her the Lord hath uplifted — behold and be
calm!

"The mother of him at the window looks out thro'
the lattice to listen —
Why roll not the wheels of his chariot? why does he
stay?
Shall he not return with the booty of battle, and
glisten
In songs of his triumph — ye women, why do ye not
say?"

And I was as she who danced when the Seas were
rended asunder
And stood, until Egypt pressed in to be drowned
unto death.
My breasts were as fire with the glory, the rocks
that were under

My feet grew quick with the gloating that beat in my breath.

At night I stole out where they cast him, a sop to the jackal and raven.
But his bones stood up in the moon and I shook with affright.
The strength shrank out of my limbs and I fell, a craven,
Before him — the nail in his temple gleamed bloodily bright.

Jehovah! Jehovah! art Thou not stronger than gods of the heathen?
I slew him, that Sisera, prince of the host Thou dost hate.
But fear of his blood is upon me, about me is breathen
His spirit — by day and by night come voices that wait.

I fly to the desert, I fly to the mountain — but they will not hide me.
His gods haunt the winds and the caves with vengeance that cries
For judgment upon me; the stars in their courses deride me —
The stars Thou hast hung with a breath in the wandering skies.

Jehovah! Jehovah! I slew him, the scourge and sting of Thy Nation.
Take from me his spirit, take from me the voice of his blood.
With madness I rave — by day and by night, defamation!
Jehovah, release me! Jehovah! if still Thou art God!

TO THE SEA

Art thou enraged, O sea, with the blue peace
Of heaven, so to uplift thine armèd waves,
Thy billowing rebellion 'gainst its ease,
And with Tartarean mutter from cold caves,
From shuddering profundities where shapes
Of awe glide thro' entangled leagues of ooze,
To hoot thy watery omens evermore,
And evermore thy moanings interfuse
With seething necromancy and mad lore?

Or, dost thou labour with the drifting bones
Of countless dead, thou mighty Alchemist,
Within whose stormy crucible the stones
Of sunk primordial shores, granite and schist,
Are crumbled by thine all-abrasive beat?

With immemorial chanting to the moon,
And cosmic incantation, dost thou crave
Rest to be found not till thy wild be strewn
Frigid and desert over earth's last grave?

Thou seemest with immensity mad, blind —
With raving deaf, with wandering forlorn;
Parent of Demogorgon whose dire mind
Is night and earthquake, shapeless shame and scorn
Of the o'ermounting birth of Harmony.
Bound in thy briny bed and gnawing earth
With foamy writhing and fierce-panted tides,
Thou art as Fate in torment of a dearth
Of black disaster and destruction's strides.

And how thou dost drive silence from the world,
Incarnate Motion of all mystery!
Whose waves are fury-wings, whose winds are hurled

Whither thy Ghost tempestuous can see
A desolate apocalypse of death.
Oh, how thou dost drive silence from the world,
With emerald overflowing, waste on waste
Of flashing susurration, dashed and swirled
O'er isles and continents that shrink abased!

Nay, frustrate Hope art thou, of the Unknown,
Gathered from primal mist and firmament;
A surging shape of Life's unfathomed moan,
Whelming humanity with fears unmeant.
Yet do I love thee, O, above all fear,
And loving thee unconquerably trust
The runes that from thy ageless surfing start
Would read, were they revealed, gust upon gust,
That Immortality is might of heart!

THE DAY-MOON

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

Last night, sphered in thy shining,
A Circe — mystic destinies divining;

To-day but as a feather
Torn from a seraph's wing in sinful weather,

Down-drifting from the portals
Of Paradise, unto the land of mortals.

Yet do I feel thee awing
My heart with mystery, as thy updrawing

Moves thro' the tides of Ocean
And leaves lorn beaches barren of its motion;

Or strands upon near shallows
The wreck whose weirded form at night
unhallows

The fisher maiden's prayers —
"For *him!* — that storms may take not
unawares!"

So wan, so unavailing,
Across the vacant day-blue dimly trailing!

But Night shall come atoning
Thy phantom life thro' day, and high enthroning

Thee in her chambers arrased
With star-hieroglyphs, leave thee unharassed

To glide with silvery passion,
Till in earth's shadow swept thy glowings ashen.

A SEA-GHOST

Oh, fisher-fleet, go in from the sea
  And furl your wings.
The bay is gray with the twilit spray
  And the loud surf springs.

The chill buoy-bell is rung by the hands
  Of all the drowned,
Who know the woe of the wind and tow
  Of the tides around.

Go in, go in! Oh, haste from the sea,
  And let them rest —
The throng who long for the air — still long,
  But are left unblest.

Aye, even as I, whose hands at the bell
Now labour most.
The tomb has gloom, but Oh, the doom
Of the drear sea-ghost!

He evermore must wander the ooze
Beneath the wave,
Forlorn — to warn of the tempest born,
And to save — to save!

Then go, go in! and leave us the sea,
For only so
Can peace release us and give us ease
Of our salty woe.

ON THE MOOR

1

I MET a child upon the moor
A-wading down the heather;
She put her hand into my own,
We crossed the fields together.

I led her to her father's door —
A cottage mid the clover.
I left her — and the world grew poor
To me, a childless rover.

2

I met a maid upon the moor,
The morrow was her wedding.
Love lit her eyes with lovelier hues
Than the eve-star was shedding.

She looked a sweet good-bye to me,
And o'er the stile went singing.
Down all the lonely night I heard
But bridal bells a-ringing.

3

I met a mother on the moor,
By a new grave a-praying.
The happy swallows in the blue
Upon the winds were playing.

"Would I were in his grave," I said,
"And he beside her standing!"
There was no heart to break if death
For me had made demanding.

THE CRY OF EVE

Down the palm-way from Eden in the mid-
night
Lay dreaming Eve by her outdriven mate,
Pillowed on lilies that still told the sweet
Of birth within the Garden's ecstasy.
Pitiful round her face that could not lose
Its memory of God's perfecting was strewn
Her troubled hair, and sigh grieved after sigh
Along her loveliness in the white moon.
Then sudden her dream, too cruelly impent
With pain, broke and a cry fled shuddering
Into the wounded stillness from her lips—
As, cold, she fearfully felt for his hand,
And tears, that had before ne'er visited
Her lids with anguish, drew from her the moan:

"Oh, Adam! What have I dreamed?
Now do I understand His words, so dim
To creatures that had quivered but with bliss!
Since at the dusk thy kiss to me, and I
Wept at caresses that were once all joy,
I have slept, seeing through Futurity
The uncreated ages visibly!
Foresuffering phantoms crowded in the womb
Of Time, and all with lamentable mien
Accusing, without mercy, thee and me!
And without pity! for tho' some were far
From birth, and had no name, others were near –
Sodom and dark Gomorrah—from whose flames
Fleeing one turned . . . how like her look to mine
When the tree's horror trembled on my taste!
And Babylon upbuilded on our sin;
And Nineveh, a city sinking slow
Under a shroud of sandy centuries
That hid me not from the buried cursing eyes
Of women who e'er-bitterly gave birth!

Ah, to be mother of all misery!
To be first-called out of the earth and fail
For a whole world! To shame maternity
For women evermore — women whose tears
Flooding the night, no hope can wipe away!
To see the wings of Death, as, Adam, thou
Hast not, endlessly beating, and to hear
The swooning ages suffer up to God!
And Oh, that birth-cry of a guiltless child
In it are sounding of our sin and woe,
With prophesy of ill beyond all years!
Yearning for beauty never to be seen —
Beatitude redeemless evermore!
That birth-cry! soon so sadly to awake
That thou, Adam, dear fallen thought of God,
Thou, when thou too shalt hear humanity
Cry in thy child, wilt groaning wish the world
Back in unsummoned Void! and, woe! wilt fill
God's ear with troubled wonder and unrest!"

Softly he soothed her straying hair, and kissed
The fever from her lips. Over the palms
The sad moon poured her peace into their eyes,
Till Sleep, the angel of forgetfulness,
Folded again dark wings above their rest.

MARY AT NAZARETH

I KNOW, Lord, Thou hast sent Him —
Thou art so good to me! —
But Thou hast only lent Him,
    His heart's for Thee!

I dared — Thy poor hand-maiden —
Not ask a prophet-child:
Only a boy-babe laden
    For earth — and mild.

But this one Thou hast given
Seems not for earth — or me!
His lips flame truth from heaven,
    And vanity

Seem all my thoughts and prayers
When He but speaks Thy Law;
Out of my heart the tares
Are torn by awe!

I cannot look upon Him,
So strangely burn His eyes —
Hath not some grieving drawn Him
From Paradise?

For Thee, for Thee I'd live, Lord!
Yet oft I almost fall
Before Him — Oh, forgive, Lord,
My sinful thrall!

But e'en when He was nursing,
A baby at my breast,
It seemed He was dispersing
The world's unrest.

Thou bad'st me call Him "Jesus,"
And from our heavy sin
I know He shall release us,
From Sheol win.

But, Lord, forgive! the yearning
That He may sometimes be
Like other children, learning
Beside my knee,

Or playing, prattling, seeking
For help — comes to my heart. . . .
Ah sinful, Lord, I'm speaking —
How good Thou art!

ADELIL

Proud Adelil! Proud Adelil!
Why does she lie so cold?
(I made her shrink, I made her reel,
I made her white lids fold.)

We sat at banquet, many maids,
She like a Valkyr free.
(I hated the glitter of her braids,
I hated her blue eye's glee!)

In emerald cups was poured the mead;
Icily blew the night.
(But tears unshed and woes that bleed
Brew bitterness and spite.)

"A goblet to my love!" she cried,
"Prince where the sea-winds fly!"
(Her love! — it was for that he died,
And for it she should die.)

She lifted the cup and drank — she saw
A heart within its lees.
(I laughed like the dead who feel the thaw
Of summer in the breeze.)

They looked upon her stricken still,
And sudden they grew appalled.
("It is thy lover's heart!" I shrill
As the sea-crow to her called.)

Palely she took it — did it give
Ease there against her breast?
(Dead — dead she swooned, but I cannot
live,
And dead I shall not rest.)

INTIMATION

All night I smiled as I slept,
For I heard the March-wind feel
Blindly about in the trees without
For buds to heal.

All night in dreams, for I smelt,
In the rain-wet woods and fields,
The coming flowers and the glad green hours
That summer yields.

All night — and when at dawn
I woke with the blue-bird's cheep,
Winter with all its chill and pall
Seemed but a sleep.

IN JULY

This path will tell me where dark daisies dance
To the white sycamores that dell them in;
Where crow and flicker cry melodious din,
And blackberries in ebon ripeness glance
Luscious enticings under briery green.
It will slip under coppice limbs that lean
Brushingly as the slow-belled heifer pants
    Toward weedy water-plants
That shade the pool-sunk creek's reluctant trance.

I shall find bell-flower spires beside the gap
And lady phlox within the hollow's cool;
Cedar with sudden memories of Yule
Above the tangle tipped with blue skullcap.
The high hot mullein fond of the full sun

Will watch and tell the low mint when I've won
The hither wheat where idle breezes nap,
And fluffy quails entrap
Me from their brood that crouch to escape mishap.

Then I shall reach the mossy water-way
That gullies the dense hill up to its peak,
There dally listening to the eerie eke
Of drops into cool chalices of clay.
Then on, for elders odorously will steal
My senses till I climb up where they heal
The livid heat of its malingering ray,
And wooingly betray
To memory many a long-forgotten day.

There I shall rest within the woody peace
Of afternoon. The bending azure frothed
With silveryness, the sunny pastures swathed,
Fragrant with morn-mown clover and seed-fleece;
The hills where hung mists muse, and Silence calls

To Solitude thro' aged forest halls,
Will waft into me their mysterious ease,
And in the wind's soft cease
I shall hear hintings of eternities.

FROM ABOVE

WHAT do I care if the trees are bare
And the hills are dark
And the skies are gray.

What do I care for chill in the air
For crows that cark
At the rough wind's way.

What do I care for the dead leaves there —
Or the sullen road
By the sullen wood.

There's heart in my heart
To bear my load!
So enough, the day is good!

BY THE INDUS

Thou art late, O Moon,
Late,
I have waited thee long.
The nightingale's flown to her nest,
Sated with song.
The champak hath no odour more
To pour on the wind as he passeth o'er —
But my heart it will not rest.

Thou art late, O Love,
Late,
For the moon is a-wane.
The kusa-grass sighs with my sighs,
Burns with my pain.

The lotus leans her head on the stream —
Shall I not lean to thy breast and dream,
Dream ere the night-cool dies?

Thou art late, O Death,
Late,
For he did not come!
A pariah is my heart,
Cast from him — dumb!
I cannot cry in the jungle's deep —
Is it not time for the Tomb — and Sleep?
O Death, strike with thy dart!

EVOCATION

(*Nikko, Japan*, 1905)

Dim thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Booms the temple bell,
Down from the tomb of Iêyasü
Yearning, as a knell.

Down from the tomb where many an æon
Silently has knelt;
Many a pilgrimage of millions —
Still about it felt.

Still, for I see them gather ghostly
Now as the numb sound
Floats, an unearthly necromancy,
From the past's dead ground.

See the invisible vast millions,
Hear their soundless feet
Climbing the shrine-ways to the gilded
Carven temple's seat.

And, one among them — pale among them —
Passes waning by.
What is it tells me mystically
That strange one was I? . . .

Weird thro' the mist and cryptomeria
Dies the bell — 'tis dumb.
After how many lives returning
Shall I hither come?

Hither again! and climb the votive
Ever mossy ways?
Who shall the gods be then, the millions
Meek, entreat or praise?

THE CHILD GOD GAVE

"Give me a little child
To draw this dreary want out of my breast,"
I cried to God.
"Give, for my days beat wild
With loneliness that will not rest
But under the still sod!"

It came — with groping lips
And little fingers stealing aimlessly
About my heart.
I was like one who slips
A-sudden into Ecstasy
And thinks ne'er to depart.

"Soon he will smile," I said,
"And babble baby love into my ears —

How it will thrill!"
I waited — Oh, the dread,
The clutching agony, the fears! —
He was so strange and still.

Did I curse God and rave
When they came shrinkingly to tell me 'twas
A witless child?
No . . . I . . . I only gave
One cry . . . just one. . . I think . . .
because . . .
You know . . . he never smiled.

THE WINDS

The East Wind is a Bedouin,
And Nimbus is his steed;
Out of the dusk with the lightning's thin
Blue scimitar he flies afar,
Whither his rovings lead.
The Dead Sea waves
And Egypt caves
Of mummied silence laugh
When he mounts to quench the Siroc's stench
And to wrench
From his clutch the tyrant's staff.

The West Wind is an Indian brave
Who scours the Autumn's crest.
Dashing the forest down as a slave,

He tears the leaves from its limbs and weaves
A maelstrom for his breast.
Out of the night
Crying to fright
The earth he swoops to spoil —
There is furious scathe in the whirl of his wrath,
In his path
There is misery and moil.

The North Wind is a Viking — cold
And cruel, armed with death!
Born in the doomful deep of the old
Ice Sea that froze ere Ymir rose
From Niflheim's ebon breath.
And with him sail
Snow, Frost, and Hail,
Thanes mighty as their lord,
To plunder the shores of Summer's stores —
And his roar 's
Like the sound of Chaos' horde.

The South Wind is a Troubadour;
The Spring 's his serenade.
Over the mountain, over the moor,
He blows to bloom from the winter's tomb
Blossom and leaf and blade.
He ripples the throat
Of the lark with a note
Of lilting love and bliss,
And the sun and the moon, the night and the noon,
Are a-swoon —
When he woos them with his kiss.

TRANSCENDED

I WHO was learnèd in death's lore
Oft held her to my heart
And spoke of days when we should love no more —
In the long dust, apart.

"Immortal?" No — it could not be,
Spirit with flesh must die.
Tho' heart should pray and hope make endless plea,
Reason would still outcry.

She died. They wrapped her in the dust —
I heard the dull clod's dole,
And then I knew she lived — that death's dark lust
Could never touch her soul!

LOVE'S WAY TO CHILDHOOD

We are not lovers, you and I,
  Upon this sunny lane,
But children who have never known
  Love's joy or pain.

The trees we pass, the summer brook,
  The bird that o'er us darts —
We do not know 'tis they that thrill
  Our childish hearts.

The earth-things have no name for us,
  The ploughing means no more
Than that they like to walk the fields
  Who plough them o'er.

The road, the wood, the heaven, the hills
Are not a World to-day —
But just a place God's made for us
In which to play.

AUTUMN

I KNOW her not by fallen leaves
Or resting heaps of hay;
Or by the sheathing mists of mauve
That soothe the fiery day.

I know her not by plumping nuts,
By redded hips and haws,
Or by the silence hanging sad
Under the wind's sere pause.

But by her sighs I know her well —
They are like Sorrow's breath;
And by this longing, strangely still,
For something after death.

SHINTO

(*Miyajima, Japan*, 1905)

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine where the spirits of wind and wave
Find the worship and glory we
Give to the one God great and grave —

Lowly temple and torii,
Shrine of the dead, I hang my prayer
Here on your gates — the story see
And answer out of the earth and air.

For I am Nature's child, and you
Were by the children of Nature built.
Ages have on you smiled — and dew
On you for ages has been spilt —

Till you are beautiful as Time
Mossy and mellowing ever makes:
Wrapped as you are in lull — or rhyme
Of sounding drum that sudden breaks.

This is my prayer then, this: that I
Too may reverence all of life,
Lose no beauty beneath its sky,
Miss no word of it wonder-rife!

That I may build, with music, fair
Temples and torii on each place
That I have loved — Oh, hear it, Air,
Ocean and Earth, and grant your grace!

MAYA

(*Hiroshima, Japan*, 1905)

PALE sampans up the river glide,
With set sails vanishing and slow;
In the blue west the mountains hide,
As visions that too soon will go.

Across the rice-lands, flooded deep,
The peasant peacefully wades on —
As, in unfurrowed vales of sleep,
A phantom out of voidness drawn.

Over the temple cawing flies
The crow with carrion in his beak.
Buddha within lifts not his eyes
In pity or reproval meek;

Nor, in the bamboos, where they bow
A respite from the blinding sun,
The old priest — dreaming painless how
Nirvana's calm will come when won.

"All is illusion, *Maya*, all
The world of will," the spent East seems
Whispering in me; "and the call
Of Life is but a call of dreams."

A JAPANESE MOTHER

(*In Time of War*)

THE young stork sleeps in the pine-tree tops,
Down on the brink of the river.
My baby sleeps by the bamboo copse —
The bamboo copse where the rice field stops:
The bamboos sigh and shiver.

The white fox creeps from his hole in the hill;
I must pray to Inari.
I hear her calling me low and chill —
Low and chill when the wind is still
At night and the skies hang starry.

And ever she says, "He's dead! he's dead!
Your lord who went to battle.

How shall your baby now be fed,
Ukibo fed, with rice and bread —
What if I hush his prattle?"

The red moon rises as I slip back,
And the bamboo stems are swaying.
Inari was deaf — and yet the lack,
The fear and lack, are gone, and the rack,
I know not why — with praying.

For though Inari cared not at all,
Some other god was kinder.
I wonder why he has heard my call,
My giftless call — and what shall befall?. . .
Hope has but left me blinder!

THE DEAD GODS

I THOUGHT I plunged into that dire Abyss
Which is Oblivion, the house of Death.
I thought there blew upon my soul the breath
Of time that was but never more can be.

Ten thousand years within its void I thought
I lay, blind, deaf, and motionless, until —
Though with no eye nor ear — I felt the thrill
Of seeing, heard its phantoms move and sigh.

First one beside me spoke, in tones that told
He once had been a god — "Persephone,
Tear from thy brow its withered crown, for we
Are king and queen of Tartarus no more;

"And that wan, shrivelled sceptre in thy hand,
Why dost thou clasp it still? Cast it away,
For now it hath no virtue that can sway
Dull shades or drive the Furies to their spoil.

"Cast it away, and give thy palm to mine:
Perchance some unobliterated spark
Of memory shall warm this dismal Dark.
Perchance — Vain! vain! love could not light such
gloom."

He sank. . . . Then in great ruin by him moved
Another as in travail of some thought
Near unto birth; and soon from lips distraught
By aged silence, fell, with hollow woe:

"Ah, Pluto, dost thou, one time lord of Styx
And Acheron make moan of night and cold?
Were we upon Olympus as of old
Laughter of thee would rock its festal height.

" But think, think thee of me, to whom or gloom
Or cold were more unknown than impotence!
See the unhurlèd thunderbolt brought hence
To mock me when I dream I still am Jove!"

Too much it was: I withered in the breath;
And lay again ten thousand lifeless years;
And then my soul shook, woke — and saw three biers
Chiselled of solid night majestically.

The forms outlaid upon them were enwound
As with the silence of eternity.
Numbing repose dwelt o'er them like a sea,
That long hath lost tide, wave and roar, in death.

"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris are their names,"
A spirit hieroglyphed unto my soul.
"Ptah, Ammon, and Osiris — they who stole
The heart of Egypt from the God of gods:

"Aye, they! — and see you! with them other wraiths
Rise up around — Baal, Ormuzd, Indra, all
Whom frightened ignorance and sin's appall
Have given birth, close-huddled in despair."

Their eyes were fixed upon a cloven slope
Down whose descent still other forms a-fresh
From earth were drawn, by the unceasing mesh
Of Time to their irrevocable end.

"They are the gods," one said — "the gods whom men
Still taunt with wails for help."— Then a deep light
Upbore me from the Gulf, and thro' its might
I heard the worlds cry, "God alone is God!"

CALL TO YOUR MATE, BOB-WHITE

O CALL to your mate, bob-white, bob-white,
  And I will call to mine.
Call to her by the meadow-gate,
  And I will call by the pine.

Tell her the sun is hid, bob-white,
  The windy wheat sways west.
Whistle again, call clear and run
  To lure her out of her nest.

For when to the copse she comes, shy bird
  With Mary down the lane
I'll walk, in the dusk of the locust tops,
  And be her lover again.

Ay, we will forget our hearts are old,
And that our hair is gray.
We'll kiss as we kissed at pale sunset
That summer's halcyon day.

That day, can it fade? . . . ah, bob, bob-white,
Still calling — calling still?
We're coming — a-coming, bent and weighed,
But glad with the old love's thrill!

THE DYING POET

Swing in thy splendour, O silent sun,
Drawing my heart with thee over the west!
Done is its day as thy day is done,
Fallen its quest!

Swoon into purple and rose, then die:
Tho' to arise again out of the dawn:
Die as I praise thee, ere thro' the Dark Lie
Of death I am drawn!

Sunk? art thou sunken? how great was life!
I like a child could cry for it again —
Cry for its beauty, pang, fleeting and strife,
Its women, its men!

For, how I drained it with love and delight!
Opened its heart with the magic of grief!
Reaped every season — its day and its night!
Loved every sheaf!

Aye, not a meadow my step has trod,
Never a flower swung sweet to my face,
Never a heart that was touched of God,
But taught me its grace.

So from my lids then a moment yet,
Fingering Death, hold off till I see
Lifted by memory all that I met
Under Time's lee.

All, to the coming, at last, of love! . . .
Still you can answer, my heart, the thought!
Still like a mountain-born rapid can move,
Joyous, distraught! . . .

And, by her side again, walk, in the wood! —
Come, O invisible Death with thy mask!
Shall I not learn if she lives? and could
I more of thee ask? . . .

Turn me away from the ashen west,
Where love's sad planet unveils to the dusk.
Something is stealing like light from my breast —
Soul from its husk . . .

Soft! . . . Where the dead feel the buried dead,
Where the high hermit-bell hourly tolls,
Bury me, near to the haunting tread
Of life that o'errolls.

THE OUTCAST

I DID not fear,
But crept close up to Christ and said,
"Is he not here?"

They drew me back —
The seraphs who had never bled
Of weary lack —

But still I cried,
With torn robe, clutching at His feet,
"Dear Christ! He died

"So long ago!
Is he not here? Three days, unfleet
As mortal flow

"Of time I've sought —
Till Heaven's amaranthine ways
Seem as sere nought!"

A grieving stole
Up from His heart and waned the gaze
Of His clear soul

Into my eyes.
"He is not here," troubled He sighed.
"For none who dies

"Beliefless may
Bend lips to this sin-healing Tide,
And live alway."

Then darkness rose
Within me, and drear bitterness.
Out of its throes

I moaned, at last,
"Let me go hence! Take off the dress,
The charms Thou hast

"Around me strown!
Beliefless too am I without
His love — and lone!"

Unto the Gate
They led me, tho' with pitying doubt.
I did not wait

But stepped across
Its portal, turned not once to heed
Or know my loss.

Then my dream broke,
And with it every loveless creed —
Beneath love's stroke.

APRIL

A LAUGHTER of wind and a leaping of cloud,
And April, oh, out under the blue!
The brook is awake and the blackbird loud
In the dew!

But how does the robin high in the beech,
Beside the wood with its shake and toss,
Know it — the frenzy of bluets to reach
Thro' the moss!

And where did the lark ever learn his speech?
Up, wildly sweet, he's over the mead!
Is more than the rapture of earth can teach
In its creed?

I never shall know — I never shall care!
'Tis, oh, enough to live and to love!
To laugh and warble and dream and dare
Are to prove!

AUGUST GUESTS

THE wind slipt over the hill
And down the valley.
He dimpled the cheek of the rill
With a cooling kiss.
Then hid on the bank a-glee
And began to rally
The rushes — Oh,
I love the wind for this!

A cloud blew out of the west
And spilt his shower
Upon the lily-bud crest
And the clematis.
Then over the virgin corn
Besprinkled a dower
Of dew-gems — And,
I love the cloud for this!

TO A DOVE

I

Thy mellow passioning amid the leaves,
That tremble dimly in the summer dusk,
Falls sad along the oatland's sallow sheaves
And haunts above the runnel's voice a-husk
With plashy willow and bold-wading reed.
The solitude's dim spell it breaketh not,
But softer mourns unto me from the mead
Than airs that in the wood intoning start,
Or breath of silences in dells begot
To soothe some grief-wan soul with sin a-smart.

2

A votaress art thou of Simplicity,
Who hath one fane — the heaven above thy nest;

One incense — love; one stealing litany
Of peace from rivered vale and upland crest.
Yea, thou art Hers, who makes prayer of the breeze,
Hope of the cool upwelling from sweet soils,
Faith of the darkening distance, charities
Of vesper scents, and of the glow-worm's throb
Joy whose first leaping rends the care-wound coils
That would earth of its heavenliness rob.

3

But few, how few her worshippers! For we
Cast at a myriad shrines our souls, to rise
Beliefless, unanointed, bound not free,
To sacrificing a vain sacrifice!
Let thy lone innocence then quickly null
Within our veins doubt-led and wrong desire—
Or drugging knowledge that but fills o'erfull
Of feverous mystery the days we drain!
Be thy warm notes like an Orphean lyre
To lead us to life's Arcady again!

AT TINTERN ABBEY

(June, 1903)

O Tintern, Tintern! evermore my dreams
Troubled by thy grave beauty shall be born;
Thy crumbling loveliness and ivy streams
Shall speak to me for ever, from this morn;
The wind-wild daws about thy arches drifting,
Clouds sweeping o'er thy ruin to the sea,
Gray Tintern, all the hills about thee, lifting
Their misty waving woodland verdancy!

The centuries that draw thee to the earth
In envy of thy desolated charm,
The summers and the winters, the sky's girth
Of sunny blue or bleakness, seek thy harm.

But would that I were Time, then only tender
On thee my touch should fall as o'er I sped;
Of every pillar would I be defender,
Of every mossy window — of thy dead!

Thy dead beneath obliterated stones
Upon the sod that is at last thy floor,
Who list the Wye not as it lonely moans
Nor heed thy Gothic shadows grieving o'er.
O Tintern, Tintern! trysting-place, where never
Are wanting mysteries that move the breast,
I'll hear thy beauty calling, ah, for ever —
Till sinks within me the last voice to rest!

OH, GO NOT OUT

Oh, go not out upon the storm,
Go not, my sweet, to Swalchie pool!
A witch tho' dead thy heart may charm,
Ay, and befool!

A wild night 'tis! her lover's moan,
Down under ooze and salty weed,
She'll make thee hear — and then her own!
Till thou shalt heed.

And it will suck upon thy heart —
The sorcery within her cry —
Till madness out of thee upstart,
And rage to die.

For him she loved, she laughed to death!
And as afloat his chill hand lay,
"Ha, ha! to hell I sent his wraith!"
Did she not say?

And from his finger strive to draw
The ring that bound him to her spell?
Till on her closed his hand whose awe
No curse could quell?

Oh, yea! and tho' she struggled pale,
Did it not hold her cold and fast,
Till crawled the tide o'er rock and swale,
To her at last?

Down in the pool where she was swept
He holds her — Oh, go not a-near!
For none has heard her cry but wept
And died that year.

HUMAN LOVE

We spoke of God and Fate,
And of that Life — which some await —
Beyond the grave.
"It will be fair," she said,
"But love is here!
I only crave thy breast
Not God's when I am dead.
For He nor wants nor needs
My little love.
But it may be, if I love thee
And those whose sorrow daily bleeds,
He knows — and somehow heeds!"

THE VICTORY

Oh, see! — the blows at his breast,
The fangs at his back,
The perils and pains that pressed,
The doubts in a pack,
That hunted to drag him down
Have triumphed? and now
He sinks, who climbed for the crown
To the Summit's brow?

No! — though at the foot he lies,
Fallen and vain,
With gaze to the peak whose skies
He could not attain,
The victory is, with strength —
No matter the past! —
He'd dare it again, the dark length,
And the fall at last!

AT WINTER'S END

The weedy fallows winter-worn,
Where cattle shiver under sodden hay.
The plough-lands long and lorn —
The fading day.

The sullen shudder of the brook,
And winds that wring the writhen trees in vain
For drearier sound or look —
The lonely rain.

The crows that train o'er desert skies
In endless caravans that have no goal
But flight — where darkness flies —
From Pole to Pole.

The sombre zone of hills around
That shrink in misty mournfulness from sight,
With sunset aureoles crowned —
Before the night.

MOTHER-LOVE

The seraphs would sing to her
And from the River
Dip her cool grails of radiant Life.
The angels would bring to her,
Sadly a-quiver,
Laurels she never had won in earth-strife.

And often they'd fly with her
O'er the star-spaces —
Silent by worlds where mortals are pent.
Yea, even would sigh with her,
Sigh with wan faces!
When she sat weeping of strange discontent

But one said, "Why weepest thou
Here in God's heaven —
Is it not fairer than soul can see?"

"'Tis fair, ah! — but keepest thou
Not me depriven
Of some one — somewhere — who needeth most
me?

"For tho' the day never fades
Over these meadows,
Tho' He has robed me and crowned — yet, yet!
Some love-fear for ever shades
All with sere shadows —
Had I no child *there* — whom I forget?"

TO A WARBLER

"BEAUTY! all — all — is beauty?"
Was ever a bird so wrong!
"No young in the nest, no mate, no duty?"
Ribald! is this your song?

"Glad it is ended," are you?
The Spring and its nuptial fear?
"And freedom is better than love?" beware you,
There will be May next year!

"Beauty!" again, still "beauty"?
Wait till the winter comes!
Till kestrel and hungry kite seek booty
And the bleak cold benumbs!

Wait? nay, fling it to heaven
The false little song you prate!
Too sweet are its fancies not to leaven
Even the rudest fate!

SONGS TO A. H. R.

I

THE WORLD'S, AND MINE

The world may hear
The wind at his trees,
The lark in her skies,
The sea on his leas;
May hear Song rise
So glad in its ringing
That every star
God has seems singing.
But I have a music they never can know —
The touch of you, soul of you, heart of you, Oh!
All else that is said or sung 's but a part of you —
Be it forever so!

II

LOVE-CALL IN SPRING

Not only the lark but the robin too
(Oh, heart o' my heart, come into the wood!)
Is singing the air to gladness new
As the breaking bud
And the freshet's flood!

Not only the peeping grass and the scent —
(Oh, love o' my life, fly unto me here!)
Of violets coming ere April's spent —
But the frog's shrill cheer
And the crow's wild jeer!

Not only the blue, not only the breeze,
(Oh, soul o' my heart, why tarry so long!)
But sun that is sweeter upon the trees
Than rills that throng
To the brooklet's song!

Oh, heart o' my heart, oh, heart o' my love,
(Oh soul o' my soul, haste unto me, haste!)
For spring is below and God is above —
But all is a waste
Without thee — haste!

III

MATING

THE bliss of the wind in the redbud ringing!
What shall we do with the April days!
Kingcups soon will be up and swinging —
What shall we do with May's!

The cardinal flings, "They are made for mating!"
Out on the bough he flutters, a flame.
Thrush-flutes echo, "For mating's elating!
Love is its other name!"

They know! know it! but better, oh, better,
Dearest, than ever a bird in Spring,
Know we to make each moment debtor
Unto love's burgeoning!

IV

UNTOLD

Could I, a poet,
Implant the truth of you,
Seize it and sow it
As Spring on the world.
There were no need
To fling (forsooth) of you
Fancies that only lovers heed!
No, but unfurled,
The bloom, the sweet of you,
(As unto me they are opened oft)
Would with their beauty's breath repeat of you
All that my heart breathes loud or soft!

V

LOVE-WATCH

My love's a guardian-angel
  Who camps about thy heart,
Never to flee thine enemy,
  Nor from thee turn apart.

Whatever dark may shroud thee
  And hide thy stars away,
With vigil sweet his wings shall beat
  About thee till the day.

VI

AT AMALFI

Come to the window, you who are mine,
  Waken! the night is calling.
Sit by me here — with the moon's fair shine
  Into your deep eyes falling.

The sea afar is a fearful gloom;
Lean from the casement, listen!
Anear it breaks with a faery spume,
Spraying the rocks that glisten.

The little white town below lies deep
As eternity in slumber.
O, you who are mine, how a glance can reap
Beauties beyond all number!

And, how as sails that at anchor ride
Our spirits rock together
On a love-sea — lit as this tide
With tenderest star-weather!

On a love-sea — till the dawn's up,
Over the moon low-lying.
Till we have drunk, soul-deep, the cup
Of a delight undying!

THE ATONER

WINTER has come in sackcloth and ashes
(Penance for Summer's enverdured sheaves).
Bitterly, cruelly, bleakly he lashes
His limbs that are naked of grass and leaves.

He moans in the forest for sins unforgiven
(Sins of the revelous days of June) —
Moans while the sun drifts dull from the heaven,
Giftless of heat's beshriving boon.

Long must he mourn, and long be his scourging,
(Long will the day-god aloof frown cold),
Long will earth listen the rue of his dirging —
Till the dark beads of his days are told.

THE RAMBLE

Down a road that asters tangle,
Thro' a gap where green-briar twines,
By a path where dry leaves dangle,
Sere, from the ivy vines,

We go — by sedgy fallows
And along the stifled brook,
Till it stops in lushy mallows
Just at the bridge's crook.

And then, o'er fence, thro' thicket,
To the mouth of the rough ravine;
Where the weird leaf-hidden cricket
Chirrs thro' the weirder green!

And we leap — as wildness tingles
From the air into our blood —
With a cry thro' golden dingles
Hid in the heart of the wood

Of the wood, with winds a-wrestle!
With the nut and acorn strown!
Of the wood, where creepers trestle
Tree unto tree o'ergrown!

And we climb the ledging summit
Of the hill in sunny glee.
For an hour we gaze off from it
Into the sky's blue sea.

Till a bell and sunset's crimson
Soon recall the homeward path.
And we turn as the glory dims on
The hay-field's mounded math.

Thro' the soft and silent twilight
We come, to the stile at last,
As the clear undying eyelight
Of the stars tells day is past.

RETURN

Ah, it was here — September
And silence filled the air —
I came last year to remember,
And muse, hid away from care.
It was here I came — the thistle
Was trusting her seed to the wind;
The quail in the croft gave whistle
As now — and the fields lay thinned.

I know how the hay was steeping,
Brown mows under mellow haze;
How a frail cloud-flock was creeping
As now over lone sky-ways.
Just there where the catbird's calling
Her mock-hurt note by the shed,
The use-worn wain was stalling
In the weedy brook's dry bed.

And the cricket, lone little chimer
Of day-long dreams in the vines,
Chirred on like a doting rhymer
O'er-vain of his firstling lines.
He's near me now by the aster,
Beneath whose shadowy spray
A sultry bee seeps faster
As the sun slips down the day.

And there are the tall primroses
Like maidens waiting to dance.
They stood in the same shy poses
Last year, as if to entrance
The stately mulleins to waken
From death and lead them around:
And still they will stand untaken,
Till drops their gold to the ground.

Yes, it was here — September
And silence round me yearned.
Again I've come to remember,

Again for musing returned
To the searing fields' assuaging,
And the falling leaves' sad balm:
Away from the world's keen waging —
To harvest and hills and calm.

LISETTE

Oh . . . there was love in her heart — no doubt
of it —
Under the anger.
But see what came out of it!

Not a knave, he! — A petty rhyme-smatterer,
Cloaking in languor
And heartache to flatter her.

And just as a woman will — even the best of them —
She yielded — brittle.
God spare me the rest of them!

For! though but kisses — she swore! — he had of her,
Was it so little?
She thought 'twas not bad of her,

Said I would lavish a burning hour-full
On any grisette.
And silenced me, powerful!

But she was mine, and blood is inflammable —
For a Lisette!
My rage was undammable. . . .

Could a stiletto's one prick be prettier?
Look at the gaping.
No? — then you're her pitier!

Pah! she's the better, and I . . . I'm your prisoner.
Loose me the strapping —
I'll lay one more kiss on her.

FROM ONE BLIND

I CANNOT say thy cheek is like the rose,
Thy hair like rippled sunbeams, and thine eyes
Like violets, April-rich and sprung of God.
My barren gaze can never know what throes
Such boons of beauty waken, tho' I rise
Each day a-tremble with the ruthless hope
That light will pierce my useless lids — then grope
Till night, blind as the worm within his clod.

Yet unto me thou art not less divine,
I touch thy cheek — and know the mystery hid
Within the twilight breeze; I smooth thy hair
And understand how slipping hours may twine
Themselves into eternity: yea, rid
Of all but love, I kiss thine eyes and seem
To see all beauty God Himself may dream.
Why then should I o'ermuch for earth-sight care?

IN A CEMETERY

When Autumn's melancholy robes the land
With silence, and sad fadings mystical
Of other years move thro' the mellow fields,
I turn unto this meadow of the dead,
Strewn with the leaves stormed from October trees,
And wonder if my resting shall be dug
Here by this cedar's moan or under the sway
Of yonder cypress — lair of winds that rove
As Valkyries sent from Valhalla's court
In search of worthy slain.
And sundry times with questioning I tease
The entombed of their estate — seeking to know
Whether 'tis sweeter in the grave to feel
The oblivion of Nature's silent flow,
Or here to wander wistful o'er her face.
Whether the harvesting of pain and joy

Which men call Life ends so, or whether death
Pours the warm chrism of Immortality
Into each human heart whose glow is spent.

And oft the Silence hears me. For a voice
Of sighing wind may answer, or a gaze,
Though wordless, from a marble seraph's face.
Or sometimes from unspeakable deeps of gold,
That ebb along the west, revealings wing
And tremble, like ethereal swift tongues
Unskilled of human speech, about my heart —
Till youth, age, death, even earth's all, it seems,
Are but brave moments wakened in that Soul,
To whom infinities are as a span,
Eternities as bird-flights o'er the sun,
And worlds as sands blown from Sahara's wilds
Into the ceaseless surging of the sea. . . .

Then twilight hours lead back my wandered spirit
From out the wilderness of mystery
Whence none may find a path to the Unknown,
And chastened to content I turn me home.

WAKING

Oh, the long dawn, the weary, endless dawn,
When sleep's oblivion is torn away
From love that died with dying yesterday
But still unburied in the heart lies on!

Oh, the sick gray, the twitter in the trees,
The sense of human waking o'er the earth!
The quivering memories of love's fair birth
Now strown as deathless flowers o'er its decease!

Oh, the regret, and oh, regretlessness,
Striving for sovranty within the soul!
Oh, fear that life shall never more be whole,
And immortality but make it less!

STORM-EBB

Dusking amber dimly creeps
  Over the vale,
Lit by the kildee's silver sweeps,
  Sad with his wail.

Eastward swing the silent clouds
  Into the night.
Burdens of day they seem — in crowds
  Hurled from earth's sight.

Tilting gulls whip whitely far
  Over the lake,
Tirelessly on o'er buoy and spar
  Till they o'ertake

Shadow and mingled mist — and then
  Vanish to wing
Still the bewildering night-fen,
  Where the waves ring.

Dusking amber dimly dies
  Out of the vale.
Dead from the dunes the winds arise —
  Ghosts of the gale.

LINGERING

I LINGERED still when you were gone,
When tryst and trust were o'er,
While memory like a wounded swan
In sorrow sung love's lore.

I lingered till the whippoorwill
Had cried delicious pain
Over the wild-wood — in its thrill
I heard your voice again.

I lingered and the mellow breeze
Blew to me sweetly dewed —
Its touch awoke the sorceries
Your last caresses brewed.

But when the night with silent start
Had sown her starry seed,
The harvest which sprang in my heart
Was loneliness and need.

FAUN-CALL

Oh, who is he will follow me
With a singing,
Down sunny roads where windy odes
Of the woods are ringing?

Where leaves are tossed from branches lost
In a tangle
Of vines that vie to clamber high —
But to vault and dangle!

Oh, who is he? — His eye must be
As a lover's
To leap and woo the chicory's hue
In the hazel-hovers!

His hope must dance like radiance
That hurries
To scatter shades from the silent glades
Where the quick hare scurries.

And he must see that Autumn's glee
And her laughter
From his lips and heart will quell all smart —
Of before and after!

THE LIGHTHOUSEMAN

When at evening smothered lightnings
Burn the clouds with fretted fires;
When the stars forget to glisten,
And the winds refuse to listen
To the song of my desires,
Oh, my love, unto thee!

When the livid breakers angered
Churn against my stormy tower;
When the petrel flying faster
Brings an omen to the master
Of his vessel's fated hour —
Oh, the reefs! ah, the sea!

Then I climb the climbing stairway,
Turn the light across the storm;

You are watching, fisher-maiden,
For the token-flashes laden
With a love death could not harm —
Lo, they come, swift and free!

One — that means, "I think of thee!"
Two —"I swear me thine!"
Three — Ah, hear me tho' you sleep!—
Is, that I know thee mine!
Thro' the darkness, One, Two, Three,
All the night they sweep:
Thro' raging darkness o'er the deep,
One — and Two — and Three

SERENITY

And could I love it more — this simple scene
Of cot-strewn hills and fields long-harvested,
That lie as if forgotten were all green,
So bare, so dead!

Or could my gaze more tenderly entwine
Each pallid beech and silvery sycamore
Outreaching arms in patience to divine
If winter's o'er?

Ah no, the wind has blown into my veins
The blue infinity of sky, the sense
Of meadows free to-day from icy pains —
From wintry vents.

And sunny peace more virgin than the glow
Falling from eve's first star into the night,
Brings hope believing what it ne'er can know
With mortal sight.

WANTON JUNE

I KNEW she would come!
Sarcastic November
Laughed cold and glum
On the last red ember
Of forest leaves.
He was laughing, the scorner,
At me forlorner
Than any that grieves —
Because I asked him if June would come!

But I knew she would come
When snow-hearted winter
Gripped river and loam,
And the wind sped flinter
On icy heel,

I was chafing my sorrow
And yearning to borrow
A hope that would steal
Across the hours — till June should come.

And now she is here —
The wanton! — I follow
Her steps, ever near,
To the shade of the hollow
Where violets blow:
And chide her for leaving,
Tho' half believing
She taunted me so,
To make her abided return more dear.

SPIRIT OF RAIN

(Miyanoshita, Japan, 1905)

Spirit of rain —
With all thy mountain mists that wander lonely
As a gray train
Of souls newly discarnate seeking new life only!

Spirit of rain!
Leading them thro' dim torii, up fane-ways onward
Till not in vain
They tremble upon the peaks and plunge rejoicing dawnward.

Spirit of rain!
So would I lead my dead thoughts high and higher,
Till they regain
Birth and the beauty of a new life's fire.

TEARLESS

Do women weep when men have died?
It cannot be!
For I have sat here by his side,
Breathing dear names against his face,
That he must list to, were his place
Over God's throne —
Yet have I wept no tear and made no moan.

Do women weep — not gaze stone-eyed?
Grief seems in vain.
Do women weep? — I was his bride —
They brought him to me cold and pale —
Upon his lids I saw the trail
Of deathly pain.
They said, "Her tears will fall like autumn rain."

I cannot weep! Not if hot tears,
Dropped on his lids,
Might burn him back to blessèd years
Of yearning love, would any rise
To flood the anguish from my eyes —
And I'm his bride!
Ah me, do women weep when men have died?

SUNSET-LOVERS

Upon how many a hill,
Across how many a field,
Beside how many a river's restful flowing,
They stand, with eyes a-thrill,
And hearts of day-rue healed,
Gazing, O wistful sun, upon thy going!

They have forgotten life,
Forgotten sunless death;
Desire is gone — is it not gone for ever?
No memory of strife
Have they, or pain-sick breath.
No hopes to fear or fears hope cannot sever.

Silent the gold steals down
The west, and mystery

Moves deeper in their hearts and settles darker.
'Tis faded — the day's crown;
But strange and shadowy
They see the Unseen as night falls stark and starker

Like priests whose altar fires
Are spent, immovable
They stand, in awful ecstasy uplifted.
Zephyrs awake tree-lyres,
The starry deeps are full,
Earth with a mystic majesty is gifted.

Ah, sunset-lovers, though
Time were but pulsing pain,
And death no more than its eternal ceasing,
Would you not choose the throe,
Hold the oblivion vain,
To have beheld so many a day's releasing?

THE EMPTY CROSS

THE eve of Golgotha had come,
And Christ lay shrouded in the garden Tomb:
Among the olives, Oh, how dumb,
How sad the sun incarnadined the gloom!

The hill grew dim — the pleading cross
Reached empty arms toward the closing gate.
Jerusalem, oh, count thy loss!
Oh, hear ye! hear ye! ere it be too late!

Reached bleeding arms — but how in vain!
The murmurous multitude within the wall
Already had forgot His pain —
To-morrow would forget the cross — and all!

They knew not Rome, before its sign,
Bending her brow bound with the nations' throne,
Would sweep all lands from Nile to Rhine
In servitude unto the Nazarene.

Nor knew that millions would forsake
Ancestral shrines great with the glow of time,
And lifting up its token shake
Aeons with thrill of love or battle's crime.

With empty arms aloft it stood:
Ah, Scribe and Pharisee, ye builded well!
The cross emblotted with His blood
Mounts, highest Hope of men, against earth's hell!

SONG

Her voice is vibrant beauty dipt
In dreams of infinite sorrow and delight.
Thro' an awaiting soul 'tis slipt
And lo, words spring that breathe immortal might.

TO HER WHO SHALL COME

1

Out of the night I cry to thee, I call,
As, in a loveless chamber where no ray
Of unbelievable light and freedom fall,
Might cry one manacled! And tho' the ways
Thou comest is unseen; tho' my heart's sore
With emptiness when morning's silent grays
Wake me to long aloneness; yet I know
Thou drawest nearer to me and wilt go
Beside me, when I have found thee, evermore!

2

So, in the garden of my heart each day
I plant thee a flower. Now the pansy, peace,
And now the lily, faith — or now a spray
Of the climbing ivy, hope. And they ne'er cease

Around the still unblossoming rose of love
To bend in fragrant tribute to her sway.
Then — for thy shelter from life's sultrier suns,
The oak of strength I set o'er joy that runs
With brooklet glee from winds that grieve above.

3

But where now art thou? Watching with love's eye
The eve-star wander? Listening through dim trees
Some thrilled muezzin of the forest cry
From his leafy minaret? Or by the sea's
Blue brim, while the spectral moon half o'er it hangs
Like the faery isle of Avalon, do these
My yearnings speak of days as yet untrod?
Sweet, sweet, O! as the ecstasy of God,
My own, must be our meeting's mystic pangs.

4

And will be soon! For last night near to-day,
Dreaming, God called me thro' the space-built
sphere

Of heaven and said, "Come, waiting one, and lay
Thine ear unto my Heart — there thou shalt hear
The secrets of this world where evils war."
Such things I heard as must rend mortal clay
To tell, and trembled — till God, pitying,
Said, "Listen" . . . Oh, my love, I heard thee
sing
Out of thy window to the morning star!

STORM-TWILIGHT

Tossing, swirling, swept by the wind,
Beaten abaft by the rain,
The swallows high in the sodden sky
Circle oft and again.

They rise and sink and drift and swing,
Twitterless in the chill;
A-haste, for stark is the coming dark
Over the wet of the hill.

Wildly, swiftly, at last they stream
Into their chimney home.
A livid gash in the west, a crash—
Then silence, sadness, gloam.

WAR

A HOST of struggling centuries lie prone
Upon the fields of time, but still the wake
Of progress loud is haunted with a groan
That seems all aspiration's soul to shake.
We bid the courier lightning leap along
Its instant path with spirit speed, command
Stars lost in night-eternity to throng
Before the eye of science; yea, we stand
On glory's peak and triumphingly cry
Our mastery of earth and sea and air.
But unto War's necessity we bare
Our piteous breasts and impotently die.

WILDNESS

To drift with the drifting clouds,
And blow with the blow of breezes,
To ripple with waves and murmur with caves
To soar, as the sea-mew pleases!

To dip with the dipping sails,
And burn with the burning heaven —
My life! my soul! for the infinite roll
Of a day to wildness given!

BEFORE AUTUMN

Summer's last moon has waned —
Waned
As amber fires
Of an Aztec shrine.
The invisible breath of coming death has stained
The withering leaves with its nepenthean wine —
Autumn's near.

Winds in the woodland moan —
Moan
As memories
Of a Nevermore.
Magnolia seeds like Indian beads are strown
From crimson pods along the earth's sere floor —
Autumn's near.

Solitude slowly steals,
Steals
Her silent way
By the songless brook.
At the gnarly yoke of a solemn oak she kneels,
The musing joy of sadness in her look —
Autumn's near.

Yes, with her golden days —
Days
When hope and toil
Are as winds at rest —
Autumn is near, and the tired year 'mid praise
Lies down with leaf and blossom on his breast —
Autumn's near.

FULFILMENT

A-BASK in the mellow beauty of the ripening sun,
Sad with the lingering sense of summer's purpose done,
The shorn and searing fields stretch from me one by one
Along the creek.

The corn-stalks drop their shadows down the fallow hill;
Wearing autumnal warmth the farm sleeps by the mill,
Around each heavy eave low smoke hangs blue and still —
Life's flow is weak.

Along the weedy roads and lanes I walk — or pause —
Ponder a fallen nut or quirking crow whose caws
Seem with prehuman hintings fraught or ancient awes
Of forest deeps.

Of forest deeps the pale-face hunter never trod,
Nor Indian, with the silent stealth of Nature shod;
Deeps tense with the timelessness and solitude of God,
Who never sleeps.

And many times has Autumn, on her harvest way,
Gathered again into the earth leaf, fruit, and spray;
Here many times dwelt rueful as she dwells to-day
The while she reaps.

LAST SIGHT OF LAND

THE clouds in woe hang far and dim:
I look again, and lo,
Only a faint and shadow line
Of shore — I watch it go.

The gulls have left the ship and wheel
Back to the cliff's gray wraith.
Will it be so of all our thoughts
When we set sail on Death?

And what will the last sight be of life
As lone we fare and fast?
Grief and the face we love in mist —
Then night and awe too vast?

Or the dear light of Hope — like that,
  Oh, see, from the lost shore
Kindling and calling "Onward, you
  Shall reach the Evermore!"

SILENCE

Silence is song unheard,
  Is beauty never born,
Is light forgotten — left unstirred
  Upon Creation's morn.

DAVID

First Published 1904

AFFECTIONATELY
TO MY BROTHER
L. LACY RICE

ACT I

CHARACTERS

SAUL	*King of Israel*
JONATHAN	*Heir to the Throne*
ISHUI	*His Brother*
SAMUEL	*The Prophet of Israel*
ABNER	*Captain of the Host of Israel*
DOEG	*An Edomite, Chief Servant of Saul and Suitor for Michal*
ADRIEL	*A Lord of Meholah, Suitor for Merab*
DAVID	*A Shepherd, secretly anointed King*
ABISHAI	*A Follower of David*
ABIATHAR	*A Priest and Follower of David*
A PHILISTINE SPY	
AHINOAM	*The Queen*
MERAB, MICHAL	*Daughters of Saul and Ahinoam*
MIRIAM	*A Blind Prophetess, and later the "Witch of Endor"*
JUDITH, LEAH, ZILLA	*Timbrel-players of the King*
ADAH	*Handmaiden to Merab*

A Chorus of Women, a Band of Prophets, Followers of David, Soldiers of Saul, People of the Court, etc.

ACT I

SCENE: *A Hall of Judgment in the palace of* SAUL *at Gibeah. The walls and pillars of cedar are richly carven—with serpents, pomegranates, and cherubim in gold. The floors are of bright marble; the throne of ivory hung with a lion's skin whose head is its footstool. On the right, by the throne, and on the left are doors to other portions of the palace; they are draped with woven curtains of purple and white. In the rear, which is open and supported on pillars, a porch crosses a court. Through the porch, on the environing hills, glow the campfires of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel. Lamps in the Hall burn low, and on the floor* JUDITH, LEAH *and* ZILLA *are reclining restively.*

Judith (*springing to her feet impatiently*). O
for a feast, pomegranate wine and song!

Leah. Oh! Oh!

Zilla. A feast indeed! the men in camp!
When was a laugh or any leaping here?
Never; and none to charm with timbreling!

[*She goes to the porch.*

Leah. What shall we do?

Judith. I'll dance.

Zilla. Until you're dead.

Judith. Or till a youth wed Zilla for her beauty?
I'll not soil mine with sullen fear all day
Because these Philistines press round. As well
Be wenches gathering grapes or wool! Come,
Leah.

[*She prepares to dance.*

Leah. No, Judith, I'll put henna on my nails,

[*Sits down.*

And mend my anklet.

Zilla (*at the curtains*). Oh! Oh! Oh!

Judith (*starts*). Now, hear her!
Who, who, now, is it? dog or fox or devil?

Zilla. All!

Judith. Then 'tis Ishui! (*Bounding to curtains.*) Yes. Ishui!
And fury in him, sallow, souring fury!
A jackal were his mate! Come, come, we'll plague him.

Zilla. Shall we—with David whom he hates?

Judith. Aie, David!
The joy of rousing men to jealousy!

Leah. Why hates he David, Zilla?

Zilla. Stupid Leah!

Judith. Hush, hush, be meet and ready now; he's near.
Look as for silly visions and for dreams!

[*They pose.* ISHUI *enters.* JUDITH *sighs.*

Ishui. Now, timbrel-gaud, why gape you here?

Judith. O! 'tis
Prince Ishui!

Zilla. Prince Ishui! Then he
Will tell us! he will tell us!
Leah. Yes!
Judith. Of David!
O, is he come? when, where?—quick, quick?—and will
He pluck us ecstasies out of his harp?
O will he, till we're wanton for him, mad,
And sigh and laugh and weep to the moon?
Ishui. Low thing!
Chaff of the king!
Judith. The king! I had not thought!
David a king! how beauteous would he be!
Ishui. David?
Judith. Turban of sapphire! robe of gold!
Ishui. A king? o'er Israel?
Judith. Who, who can tell?
Have you not heard? Yesterday in the camp,
Among war-old but fearful men, he offered
Kingly to meet Goliath—great Goliath!
Ishui. What do you say? to meet Goliath?

Judith (*laughing in his face*). Aie!

[*He thrusts her from him.*

[*She goes, dancing, with* ZILLA *and* LEAH.

Adriel (*who has entered*). Ishui, in a rage?

Ishui. Should I not be?

Adriel. Not would you be yourself.

Ishui. By . . . Israel's God!

[*Then cooling cunningly.*

But you say well, I should not, Adriel:
So pardon—and—unto our business.

Adriel. What was the offence?

Ishui. Turn from it: I have not
Bidden you here for vapors . . . tho' they had
Substance as well for you!

Adriel. For me?

Ishui. Who likes
Laughter against him?

Adriel. I was laughed at?

Ishui. Why,
It is this shepherd!

Adriel. David?

Ishui. With his harp!
Flinging enchantment on the palace air
Till he impassions to him all who breathe.

Adriel. What sting from that? He's lovable and brave.

Ishui. Lovable? *lovable?*

Adriel. I do not see.

Ishui. This, then: you've hither come with gifts and gold,
Dream-bringing amethyst and weft of Ind,
To wed my sister, Merab?

Adriel. It is so.

Ishui. And you've the king's consent; but she denies?

Adriel. As every wind, you know it.

Ishui. Still denies!
And you, lost in the maze of her, fare on
Blindly and find no reason for it!

Adriel. How?

What reason can be? women are not clear;

And least unto themselves.

Ishui. Or to their fools?

[*As* ADRIEL *stares.*

I say it, to their fools?

You shall behold.

[*Goes to curtain, and draws out* ADAH.

Your mistress, Merab, girl, whom does she love?

Unclench your hands.

Adah. I hate her.

Ishui. Insolent!

Answer; I am not milky Jonathan,

Answer; and for the rest—You hear?

Adah. She loves

The shepherd David!

Adriel. Who, girl?

Adah. I care not!

She is unkind; I will not spy for her

On Michal, and I'll tell her secrets all!

And David does not love her—and she raves.

Ishui. Off to your sleep; be off—

[*Makes to strike her.*

Adriel (*holds him*). Ishui, no.

[ADAH *goes.*

Ishui (*gnashingly*). Then see you now how "lovable" he is?

I tell you that he stands athwart us all!
The heart of Merab is swung, as a censer, to him,
My seat at table with the king usurped!
Mildew and mocking to the harp of Doeg
As it were any slave's; the while we all
Are lepered with suspicion.

Adriel. Of the king?

Ishui. Ai! and of Jonathan and Michal.

Adriel. Hush.

[*Hears voices.*

[*Enter* MICHAL, *passing, with* MIRIAM.

Adriel. Michal, delay. Whom lead you?

Michal. Miriam,
A prophetess.

Adriel. How of the king to-night?

Michal. He's not at rest; dreads Samuel's prophecy
The throne shall pass from him, and darkens more
Against this boundless Philistine Goliath
Who dares at Israel daily on the hills,
As we were dogs!

Adriel. Is David with him?

Michal. No;
But he is sent for—and will ease him—Ah!
He's wonderful to heal the king with his harp'
A waft, a sunny leap of melody,
And swift the hovering mad shadow's gone.

Adriel. I thank you.

Ishui. And (*writhes*) I curse!

Michal. What anger's this?

Ishui. Disdaining Doeg and his plea to dust,
His waiting and the winning o'er of Edom,
You are enamored of this David too?

Michal. I think my brother Ishui hath a fever.

[*She goes, calmly, with* MIRIAM.

Ishui. Now you are kindled—are you quivering,
Or must this shepherd put upon us more?

Adriel. But has he not dealt honorably?

Ishui. No.

Adriel. Why do you urge it?

Ishui. Why have senses? Does he
With Samuel the prophet not enshroud
Some secret, and has Samuel not told
The kingdom from my father shall be rent
And fall unto one another?

Adriel. You are certain?

[SAUL'S *voice within.*

Ishui. Is not the proof pouring into my ears?
Can you not hear?

Adriel. The king?

Ishui. And Samuel
With prophecy or some refusal tears him!

[*They step aside.* SAUL, *followed by* SAMUEL, *strides in and mounts the throne.*

Saul. You threat, and ever thunder threatening!
Pour seething prophecy into my veins,
Till a simoon of madness in me moves.
Am I not king, the king? chosen and sealed?
Who've been anathema and have been bane
Unto the foes of Israel, and filled
The earth with death of them?
And do you still forbid that I bear gold
And bribe away this Philistine array
Folded about us, fettering with flame?

Samuel. Yes,—yes! While there is air—and awe of Heaven
Do I forbid! A champion must rise
To level this Goliath. Thus may we
Loose on them pest of panic and of fear.

Saul. Are forty days not dead? A champion!
None will arise—'tis vain. And I'll not wait
On miracle.

Samuel. Offer thy daughter, then,
Michal, thy fairest, to whoever shall.

Saul. Demand and drain for more! without an end.

Ever vexation! No; I will not.

Samuel. Then,

Out of Jehovah and a vast foreseen

I tell thee again, thou perilous proud king,

The scepter shall slip from thee to another!

[*He moves to go.*

Saul. The scepter. . . .

Samuel. To another!

Saul. From me! No!

You rouse afar the billowing of ill.

I grant—go not!—I grovel to your will,

Fear it and fawn as to omnipotence,

[*Snatching at* SAMUEL'S *mantle.*

And vow to all its divination—all!

Samuel. Then, Saul of Israel, the hour is near,

When shall arise one, and Goliath fall!

[*Goes slowly out by the porch,* SAUL *sinks back.*

Ishui (*after a pause, keenly*). Oh, — subtle!

Saul. Thus he sways me.

Ishui. Subtle!—subtle!

And yet I must not speak; come, Adriel,

[*As if going.*

No use of us is here.

Saul. Use? subtle? Stand!

Ishui. No, father, no.

Saul. What mean you?

Ishui. Do not ask. . . .

Yet how it creeps, and how!

Saul. Unveil your words.

[*Comes down.*

Ishui. Do you not see it crawl, this serpent scheme?

Goliath slain—the people mad with praise,

Then fallen from you—Michal the victor's wife. . . .

Saul. Say on, say on.

Ishui. Or else the champion slain—

Fear on the people—panic—the kingdom's ruin?

Saul. Now do the folds slip from me.

Ishui. And you see?
How, then, if one arise?—If one arise?

Saul. Death, death! If he hath touched this prophet—if
Merely a little moment!—

Ishui. If?—I've seen
Your David with him.

Saul. Death! if—— (*uncertain*) Come here: David?

Ishui. In secret.

Saul. Say you?

Ishui. Yes.

Saul. The folds slip further;
To this you lead me—hatred against David!
To this with supple envy's easy glide!

Ishui. I have but told——

Saul. You have but builded lies,
As ever you are building and forever.
I'll hear no more against him—(*calls*) Abner! (*a pause*)—no.
(*To* ABNER, *who enters.*) David, and with his harp.

Abner. My lord——

Saul. Not come?

He is not come? Forever he delays!

[*Remounts throne.*

Abner. Time's yet to pass.

Saul. There is not. Am I king?

He should be swift as eagles. Bring me wine.

[*Then as a harp sounds.*

But no, 'tis he! . . . 'Tis David! . . . And he sings! [*Rises.*

David (*bravely, within*).

Smiter of Hosts,
Terrible Saul!
Vile on the hills laughs he who boasts
None is among
Great Israel's all
Fearless for Saul, King Saul!

[*Entering with people of the palace.*

Aye, is there none
Galled of the sting,
Will at the soul of Goliath run?

Wring it and up
To his false gods fling? . . .
None for the king, the king?

[*He drops to his knee, amid praise, before the throne.*

Saul (*darkening*). Forego this praise and stand
Away from him; 'tis overmuch.
(*To* DAVID.) Why have
You dallied and delayed?

David. My lord, delayed?

Saul. Do not smile wonder, mocking!

David. Why, my lord,
I do not mock. Only the birds have wings.
Yet on the vales behind me I have left
Haste and a swirl, a wonderment of air,
And in the torrent's troubled vein amaze,
So swift I hurried hither at your urgence
Out of the fields and folding the far sheep!

Saul. You have not; you have dallied.

[*Motions rest out.*

You have dallied.

[*Comes down indeterminately.*

And now——

David. And now the king with darkness foams,
With sheeted passions like to lightning gusts.

[*All have gone.*

Shall I not play to him?

Saul. You shall not, no.

[*Slowly draws a dagger.*

I'll not be lulled.

David. But show a tiger gleam?
Terrible fury stealing from the heart
And crouching cold within the eye, O Saul?

Saul. I'll not endure. They say that you——

David. They say?
What is this raving in you? Does the truth
So limpid overflow in palaces?
Never an enemy to venom it?
Am I not David, faithful, and thy friend?

Saul. I'll slay you and regretless.

David (*unmoving*). Slay, my lord?

Saul. Do you not fear? And brave me to my breast?

David. Have I done wrong that I should fear the king?

Reed as I am, could he not breathe and break me?
And I should be oblivion at a word!
But under the terror of his might have I
Not seen his heart beat justice and beat love?
See, even now! . . .

Saul (*torn*). I will not listen to them!

David. To whom, my lord, and what?

Saul. Ever they say,
"This David," and "This David!" It is lies. . . .
[*Goes to throne.*
But think you, David, I shall lose the kingdom?

David (*starting*). My lord! . . .

Saul. Pain in your eyes? you think it? Deem I cannot overleap this destiny?

David. To that let us not verge; it has but ill.
Deeper the future gulf is for our fears.
Forget it. Forget the brink may ever gape,

And wield the throne so well that God Himself
Must not unking you, more than He would cry
The morning star from Heaven! Then, I swear it,
None else will!

Saul. Swear?

David. Nay, nay!

Saul. You swear?

David. But words,
Foolishly from the heart; a shepherd speech!
Give them no mood; but see, see yonder fires
Camping upon the peace of Israel,
As we were carrion beneath the sun!
Let us conceive annihilation on them,
Hurricane and a deluging and ruin.

Saul. Ah, but the prophecy! the prophecy!
It eats in me the food of rest and ease.
And David, nearer: Samuel in my stead
Another hath anointed.

David. Saul, not this!
This should not fall to me, my lord; to me!
You cannot understand; it pains beyond

All duty and enduring!

Saul. Pains beyond . . . ?

Who is he? know you of him? do you? know you?

You sup the confidence of Samuel?

Who bids me give my daughter, bids me give——

I'll search from Nile to Nineveh——

David. My lord!

Saul. Mountain and desert, wilderness and sea,

Under and over, search—and find. (*Rising.*) And when——

Enter MICHAL *joyously.*

Michal. O father, father! David! Listen! . . . Why

All here is dark and quivering as pain,

And a foreboding binds me ere I breathe!

David, you have not been as sun to him!

David. But Michal will be now.

Saul. Child, well, what then?

Michal. Father, a secret! Oh, and it will make

Dawn and delight in you!

Saul. Perhaps; then, well?

Michal. Oh, I have heard . . . !

[*Stops.*

Saul. Have heard!—Why do you pale?

[*She stands unaccountably moved.*

Now are you Baal-bit?

David. Michal!

Michal (*in terror*). David! . . . David!

What does it mean? I cannot speak! It shrinks

Shivering down upon my heart in awe!

David. And numbs you so?—

Saul. Let it rush from your lips!

Am I to gape here, muffled in a mist

Of silly megrims! Speak, what is it?

Michal. Ah!

I know not; danger rising and its wing

Sudden against my lips!

David. To warn?

Michal. It shall not!

There—now again flows joy: I think it flows.

Saul. Then—you have heard . . . ?

Michal. Yes, father, yes! Have you
Not much desired discovery of whom
Samuel hath anointed?

Saul. Well?

Michal. I've found——

[DAVID *blenches.*

Almost have found! A prophetess to-day
Hath told me that he is a——

[*Realizes.*

Saul. Now you cease?

[*She stands horrified.*

Sudden and senseless!

Michal. David!—No!

Saul. God! God!
Have I not bidden swiftly! Ever then
Vexation? I could—Ah. Will she not speak!

Michal. I cannot.

Saul. Cannot! Are you flesh of me?

David. My lord, not anger!

Saul. Cannot! (*up*) Has she breath?

David. Yea, yea, O king—and I! Yet——

(*with pleading passion*) It is thus!

Her lips could never seal upon a wrong.
Sudden divinity is on them, silence
Sent for the benison of Israel,
Else were it shattered by her love to you!
Believe, in all the riven realm of duty
There's no obedience from thee she would hold.
If it seem other——

Enter ABNER, *hurriedly.*

Abner. Pardon, O king. A word.

Saul. I will not. Do you come with vexing too?

Abner. The Philistines—some fury is afoot;
A spy's within our gates—and scorns to speak.

Saul. Conspiracy of silence! . . . Back to him.

[ABNER *goes.*

(*To* DAVID *and* MICHAL.) But you—I'll not forget. I'll not forget.

[*Goes trembling, his look bent backward still upon them.*

David (*casting off suspense*). Forget! anointing! peril! What are they all?
Michal!—for me you have done this, for me?
[*She stands immovable.*
O has a princess in whose veins there flow
Sympathy and all love unto a father,—
Has she so shielded me?
Michal. You are the anointed?
David. I am—oh, do not flint your loveliness!—
I am the anointed, but all innocent
In will or hope of any envious wrong,
As lily blowing of blasphemy! as dew
Upon it is of enmity!
Michal. Anointed!
You whom the king uplifted from the fields!
David. And who am ever faithful to him!
Michal. You,
Whom Jonathan loves more than women love!
David. Yet reaches not my love to Jonathan!
Michal. You—you!
David. But, hear me!

Michal. You, of all!

David. O hear!

Of my anointing Jonathan is 'ware,
Knows it is holy, helpless, innocent
As dawn or a drift of dreaming in the night!
Knows it unsought—out of the skies—supernal—
From the inspirèd cruse of Samuel!
For Israel it dripped upon me—yea!
For Israel must drip until I die!
Or till high Gath and Askalon are blown
Dust on the wind, and all Philistia
Lie peopleless and still under the stars! . . .
Goliath, then, a laughter evermore! . . .
Still, still you shrink? do you not see, not feel?

Michal. So have you breathed yourself about my heart,
Even as moonlit incense, spirit flame
Burning away all barrier!

David. But see!

Michal. And all the world has streamed a rapture in,

Till even now my lids from anger falter
And the dew falls!

David. Restrain! O do not weep!
Upon my heart each tear were as a sea
Flooding it from all duty but the course
Of thy delight!

Michal. Poor, that I should have tears!
Fury were better, tempest! O weak eyes,
When 'tis my father, and with Samuel
You creep to steal his kingdom!

David. Michal! . . . Michal!

Michal. Yes, steal it!

David. Cruel! fell accusal! Yea,
Utterly false it is and full of wounding!

[*A pause.*

And yet so be it—so—unto the end!

[*As if broken.*

Delirious wings of hope that fluttered up,
At last to fall!

[*Moves to go.*

Michal. David!

David. Farewell!

Michal. . . . You must not!

David. Peace to you, peace and joy!

Michal. You must not go!

[*He turns. She sways and reaches to him her arms. But as they move together* DOEG *and* MERAB *appear, then vanish amid dismay.*

Michal. Merab and Doeg!

David (*has sprung to her*). Yet what matter, now!

Were it the driven night-unshrouded dead!
Under the firmament is but one need,
That you will understand!

Michal. But Merab! ah,
She's cunning, cold and cruel, and she loves thee;
Hath told her love to Ahinoam the queen!
And Doeg hates thee—since for me he's mad!

David. Then be his hate as wild, as wide as winds

That gather up the desert for their blast,
Be it as Sheol deep, stronger than stars
That fling fate on us, and I care not, care not,
If I am trusted and to Michal truth!—
Hear, hear me! for the kingdom, tho' 't may
come,
I yearn not; but for you!

Michal. No, no!

David. For you!

Since I a shepherd o'er a wild of hills
First beheld you the daughter of the king
Amid his servants, leaning, still with noon,
Beautiful under a tamarisk, until
All beauty else is dead——

Michal. Ah, cease!

David. Since then
I have been wonder, ravishment and dream!
The molded light and fragrant miracle,
Body of you and soul, lifted me till
When you departed—when you left me—

Michal. Ah!

David. I fell thro' infinity of void!

Michal. No more!

David. Then came the prophet Samuel with anointing!

My hope sprung as the sun!

Michal. I must not hear!

David. Then was I called to play before the king.

Here in this hall where cherubim shine out,

Where the night silence——

Michal. David!

David Where it strung me,

I waited, shepherd-timid, and you came,

You for the king to try my skill! you, you!—

And then divinely on thro' days we swept,

Far from the birth unto the bourne of bliss,

Until to-night you would not, tho' bereft,

Reveal my helpless chrism, give me to peril!

Say but the reason!

Michal. David!

David. Speak, O speak!

Michal. And shall I, shall I? how this prophetess
Miriam hath foretold——

David. Some wonder? speak!

Michal (*springs up the throne, then down*). No, no! horror in me moans out against it.
Wed me with destiny against my father?
Dethrone my mother? Ah!

David. Not that—no wrong!

Michal. Then swear conspiracy upon its tide
Never shall lift you!

David. Deeper than soul or sea,
Deep as divinity is deep, I swear.
If it shall come, the kingdom——

Michal. "If!" not "if."
Surrender this anointing! Spurn it, say
You never will be king though Israel
Kingless go mad for it!

David. I cannot.

Michal. Ha!

David. I cannot—and I must not. It is holy!

Michal. Then must I hate you—scorn you—

David. Michal!

Michal. And will.

But to reign over Israel you care,

Not for the peace of it!

David. And Michel cares,

In saying so, only to rend and wrong me!

[*Loftily.*

And yet let her behold yon Philistines

Whose fires lap up the night with bloody tongue;

[*A commotion is heard within.*

As God has swung the world and hung forever

The infinite in awe, to-morrow night

Not one of them shall burn!

Michal. And wherefore?

David. None!

Michal. What is this strength! It seizes on me!

No,

I'll not believe; no, no, more than I would

From a boy's breath or the mere sling you wear

A multitude should flee! And you shall learn
A daughter to a father may be true
Tho' paleness be her doom until she die!

[*She turns to go. Enter* JONATHAN *eagerly.*

Jonathan. David!

David. My friend—my Jonathan! 'Tis you?

[*They embrace.* MICHAL *goes.*

Jonathan. Great heart, I've heard how yesterday before
The soldiers you . . . But Michal's gone? No word?

David. The anointing.

Jonathan. Ah, she knows?

David. All.

Jonathan. And disdains
Believing? tell me.

David. No, not now—not now.
Let us forget it in a leap of deeds.

[*The commotion sounds again.*

For hear that murmur misty of distress.
What is it? sprung of the Philistines? new terror?
This sounding giant flings again his foam?
Jonathan, I am flame that will not wait.
What is it? I must strike.

Jonathan. David . . .

David. Tell me,
And do not bring dissuasion more, or pause.

Jonathan. The king comes here.

David. Now?

Jonathan. With a spy who keeps
Fiercely to silence.

David. Then is peril up!
Jonathan . . . !

Jonathan. David, you must cool from this.
Determination surges you o'er-far.
I will not see you rush to perishing,
Not though it be the aid of Israel.

David. I must. . . . I will not let them ever throng,
Staining the hills, and starving us from peace.

Rather the last ray living in me, rather
Death and the desecration of the worm.
Bid me not back with love, nor plea; I must!

Jonathan. But think——

David. No thought!

Jonathan. 'Twere futile——

David. Hear; the king!

Jonathan. The madness of it!

David. No, and see; they come.

Jonathan. Strangely my father is unstrung.

David (*unchangeably*). They come!

[*Enter* SAUL *with* SAMUEL; *Soldiers with the spy;* AHINOAM *with* ABNER; *and all the court in suppressed dread.*

Saul (*to* SAMUEL). He will not speak, but scorns me, and his lips
Bitterly curve and grapple. But he shall
Learn there is torture to it! Set him forth.

[*The* SPY *is thrust forward.*

Tighten his bonds up till he moan.

[*It is done.*

Aye, gasp,

Accursed Philistine! Now wilt thou tell

The plan and passion of thy people 'gainst us?

Spy. Baal!

Saul. Tighten the torture more. . . . Now will you?

Spy (*in agony*). Yea!

Saul. On, then, reveal.

Spy. New forces have arrived,

Numberless; more than peaks of Arabah.

[*General movement of uneasiness.*

Unless before to-morrow's noon one goes

To overthrow Goliath . . . Gods! the pain!

Saul. Well? Well?

Spy. Then Gibeah attacked, and all,

Even to sucking babes, they'll put to sword!

[*A movement of horror.*

Ahinoam. All Gibeah!

A Woman. My little ones? No, no!

[*She rushes frantically out.*

Samuel. Then, Saul of Gibeah, one thing and one

Alone is to be done. A champion,

To break this beetling giant down to death!

Saul. There is none.

Samuel. Is none! Call! I order it.

Saul. Then who will dare against him!

[*A silence.*

See you now.

[DAVID *quivers.*

Samuel. You, Abner, will not?

Abner. It were death and vain.

Samuel. Doeg, chief servant of the king?

Doeg. Why me?

Had I a mother out of Israel?

I am an alien, an Edomite.

Saul (*angrily*). And so there is none. Therefore

We—— [*Rises.*

David (*suddenly*). My lord!

[SAUL *turns as he pushes forward.*

There is! for this is not endurable.
Futile and death? Alien? Edomite?
Has not this Philistine before the gates,
With insult and illimitable breath,
Vaunting of vanity and smiting laughter,
Boasted and braved and threatened up to Baal?
And now unless one slay him, Israel
From babe to age must bleed and be no more?
I am a shepherd, have but seized the lion
And throttled the bleating kid out of his throat;
Little it then beseems that I thrust in
Where battle captains pale and falter off;
But this is past all carp of rank or station.
One must go out—Goliath must have end.

Doeg. Ah, ah! and *you* will!

Ishui. *You?*

Jonathan. No, David!

Saul. *You?*

David. Sudden you hound about me ravenous?

Have I thrown doom not daring to your feet,
Ruler of Israel, that you rise wild,
Livid above me as an avalanche?

Doeg. A plot! it is a plot! He will be slain—
From you, my lord, dominion then will fall!
Or should it not . . .

Samuel. Liar! it is no plot.
But courage sprung seraphic out of night,
Beautiful, yea, a bravery from God!

Michal (*behind the throng*). Open! and let me enter! Open! Open!

[*She enters.*

[*Then not knowing what has passed.*

Father!
It is not false? but now the uttermost
Is that if this Goliath still exult,
There's peril of desolation, bloody ruin?

Samuel. I answer for him; yea.

Michal. Then to your will,
Father, unto will of yesterday
I bend me now with sacrificial joy.

Unto Goliath's slayer is the hand
Of Michal, the king's daughter!

David (*joyously*). Michal! Michal!

Doeg. See you, my lord? Do you not understand?

Ishui. It is another coiling of their plot!

Michal. Coiling of plot? What mean you?

Merab. Ah! You know
Not it is David offers against Goliath?

Michal. David? (*Shrinking.*) David?

[*A low tumult is heard without. Enter a* CAPTAIN *hurriedly.*

Captain. O King, bid me to speak!

Saul. Then speak!

Captain. Fear is upon the host. There will
Be mutiny unless, Goliath slain,
Courage spring up anew.

David. My lord, then, choose!
Ere longer waiting fester to disaster.

Samuel. Yea, king of Gibeah, and bid him go,
And Michal for his meed! or evermore

Evil be on you and the sear of shame—
And haunting memory beyond the tomb!

Saul. Then let him—let him. And upon the field
Of Ephes-Dammin. But I am not blind!
(*To* ABNER.) Let him, to-morrow! Go prepare the host.
Yet—I am king, remember! I am king!

[SAUL *goes; murmurs of relief . . . All follow, but* MICHAL, *past* DAVID *with joy or hate.*

David. Michal!

[*She struggles against tears, but, turning, goes. He stands and gazes after her. Then a trumpet sounds and soldiers throng to the porch.*

David (*thrilled, his hand on his sling*). For Israel! For Israel!

[*Goes toward them.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE: *The royal tent of* SAUL *pitched on one hill of the battlefield of Ephes-Dammin. The tent is of black embroidered with various warlike designs. To one side on a daïs are the chairs of* SAUL *and* AHINOAM*; also* DAVID'S *harp. On the other side, toward the front, is a table with weapons. The tent wall is lifted along the back, revealing on the opposite hill, across a deep narrow valley, the routed camp of the Philistines; before it in gleaming brazen armor lies Goliath slain. Other hills beyond, and the sky above. By the small table, her back to the battlefield, sits* MERAB *in cold anger.* AHINOAM *and several women look out in ecstasy toward* DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN, *and the army, returning victorious, and shouting.*

First Woman. See, see, they come! they near! they come!

Second Woman. They come!

An avalanche! over the shining brook,
Over the brook, and bright amid hosannas!

Third Woman. And now amid the rushes!

First Woman. And the servants!
Goliath's head high-borne upon a charger!
The rocks that cry reverberant and vast!
The people and the palms!

Third Woman. Yea, all the branches
Torn from the trees! The waving of them—O!

Second Woman. And David, see! triumphant, calm, between
The king and Jonathan! . . . His glory
All the wild generations of the wind
Ever shall utter! Hear them—

[*The tumult ascends afar.*

"David! David!"
O queen! a sea of shouting!

Ahinoam. Which you crave?
Then go and lave you in this tide of joy.

[*The women go rapturously.* AHINOAM *turns.*

Merab. Mother!

Ahinoam. My daughter?

Merab. Speak.

Ahinoam. They all are gone.

Merab. And Michal, where?

Ahinoam. I do not know, my child.

Merab. Why did my father pledge her to him? you

Not hindering?

Ahinoam. She is your sister. You

Are pledged to Adriel.

Merab. And as a slave!

And if I do not love him there is—riches!

If he is Sodom-bitter to me—riches!

Ahinoam. But for the kingdom.

Merab. For my torture! What

Kingdom is to a woman as her love?

Ahinoam. Then David still enthralls you?

Merab. Though he never

Sought me with any murmur or desire!

Though he is Michal's for Goliath's death!
Michal's to-day, unless——

Ahinoam. Merab, a care!
Too near in you were ever love and hate.

[*The tumult nears.* AHINOAM *goes to look out.* DOEG *enters to* MERAB.

Doeg (*low*). News, Merab!

Merab. Well?

Doeg. A triumph for us, yet!
The king is worn, as a leper pent, between
Wonder of David and quick jealousy
Because of praise this whelming of Goliath
Wakes in the people.

Merab. Then? the triumph?

Doeg. This.

[*The tumult, nearer.*

I've skillfully disposed the women
To coldly sing of Saul, but of our David—

[*Watches her.*

With lavish of ecstasy as to a king.

Merab (*springing up*). Then *I* will praise him!

Doeg. David? you?

Merab. As he

Was never—and shall never be again.

[*Takes a dagger.*

Doeg. But——

Merab. Give me the vial.

Doeg. The poison?

Merab. Come—at once!

Doeg. What will you do?

Merab (*seizes vial*). At once with it.

[*Dips dagger in.*

Doeg. You'll stab him?

Merab. As any fool? Wait. And the rest now, quick.

This timbrel player, Judith? is she ready?

Doeg. And ravishing. I've told her we shall send her

Sudden, as Michal is alone with David,

To seize him with insinuative kisses,
And arms that wind as they were wonted to him.
Michal once jealous—and already I
Have sowed suspicions——

[*Laughs.*

Merab. May it be their rending.

[*The tumult near.*

But come, come, we must see; and show no frown.

[*They go to look out. Shouts of "David! David!" arise, and timbrelers, dancing and singing, pass the tent opening; then priests with the Ark and its cherubim of gold.* DAVID, SAUL, JONATHAN, ISHUI, *and the court then enter amid acclamations. Before them the head of Goliath is borne on a charger, under a napkin.* SAUL *darkly mounts the throne with* AHINOAM, *to waving of palms and praise.*

A Woman (*breaking from the throng*). Our little ones are saved! Hosanna! joy!

[*She kisses* DAVID'S *hand.*

Jonathan. Woman, thy tongue should know an angel-word,
Or seraph syllables new-sung to God!
Earth has not any rapture well for this!
David, my brother!

David. Jonathan, my friend!
While life has any love, know mine for you.

Jonathan. Then am I friended as no man was ever!
And though my soul were morning wide it were
Helpless to hold my wonder and delight!
O people, look upon him!

People. David! David!

Jonathan. Never before in Israel rose beauty
Up to this glory!

David. Jonathan, nay——

Jonathan. Never!

[*Looses his robe and girdle.*

Therefore I pour him splendor passionate.
In gold and purple, this my own, I clothe him.
David, my brother!

People. David! David! David!

Saul (*rising up livid*). Am I to stifle, full-of-lauding fools!
Of breath and ravishment unceasing!

Ahinoam. Saul!

Saul. Is it not praise enough, has he not reached
The skies on it?

David. O king, my lord——

Saul. Had Saul
Ever so rich a rapture from his son?
Ever this worshiping of utterance?

David. My lord, my lord, this should not fret you.

Doeg (*derisively*). Nay!

David. 'Tis only that the soul of Jonathan,
Brimmed by the Philistines with bitterness,
Sudden is joy and overfloweth——

Doeg. Fast——

David. Upon his friend, thy servant, David.

Doeg. Aie!

[*He turns away laughing.*

Saul. Why do you laugh?

Doeg. "Thy servant David!"

Saul (*more darkly*). Why!

A Woman (*without*). King Saul has slain his thousands!

Doeg. O-ho-ho!

Woman. But David his ten thousands!

Doeg. Do you hear?

King Saul has slain his thousands, David ten!

Thy servant, is he? servant?

David. Yea, O king! . . .

Therefore be wielded by no venom-word,

As a weed under the wind!

Saul (*afoam*). 'Tis overmuch!

I'll burst all bond of priest or prophecy.

Nor cringe to threatening and fondle fear.

[*He seizes a javelin.*

I'll smite where'er I will.

David. My lord! my lord!

Saul. I'll smite, I tell you smite!

David. And then, O king —

[*Goes to him.*

Have rapid palsy come upon thy hand,
An impotence, a shriveling with fear,
Avenging ere thou shed offenseless blood?

[SAUL'S *hand drops.*

Is this thy love, the love of Saul the king,
Who once was kindlier than kindest are?
For but a woman's wantonness of word
And idle air, my life?

Ahinoam. Saul, Saul!

Jonathan. O shame!

David. Some enemy—does Doeg curve his lip?—
Hath put into her mouth this stratagem
Of fevered, false-impassioned overpraise.

[SAUL, *tortured, sweeps from the tent, entreated of* JONATHAN. *Many follow in doubt, whispering.*

Doeg (*at door, to* DAVID). This is not all, boy
out of Bethlehem.
Goliath's dead——
David. But not all villainy?

[*Only* MICHAL *and* MERAB *are left.*
DAVID *waits.*

Merab (*at length, as if loathly*). A shame it is!
I burn for it myself!
Burn, heart and brain!
David. For what, and suddenly?
Merab. My father so ungenerously wroth!
And wrought away from recompense so right.
Can you forgive him?
David. Merab?
Merab. Is it strange
That even *I* now ask it?
David. Merab's self?
Merab. Herself and not to-day your friend; but
now
Conquered to exultation and aglow

To wreathe you for this might to Israel,
Beautiful, unbelievable and bright!
Noble the dawn of it was in your dream,
Noble the lightning of it in your arm,
And noble in your veins the fearless flow
And dare of blood!—so noble that I ask
As a remembrance and bequest forever,
In priceless covenant of peace between us,
A drop of it——

[*She draws dagger and offers it to him.*

Upon this sacred blade . . .

David. Such kindness? and such honor?

Merab. Poor requital
To one whose greatness humbles me from hate.

David (*slowly*). Then of my veins whatever drop you will.
But, no . . . (*Pauses.*) You do not mock me?

Merab. With high truth?
I crave it more than holy, priceless nard.

David. Or perfume out of India jewel poured?

[*He searches her eyes.*

Or than—I may believe?—a miracle
Of dew, were you a traveler upon
The illimitable desert's thirst? Or than—

[*He draws his own dagger, pricks his wrist, and hands it her.*

Than this?

Merab. Shepherd!

David (*quickly*). Treachery, treachery, then?
Under a sham of tribute poison?

Michal. Merab!

David. And I of vanity should prick it in?
I a mere shepherd innocent of wile?
A singer from the shearing and no more? . . .
The daughter of King Saul has yet to learn.

[*She goes. He turns to* MICHAL.

But you, fairest of all my hopes, what word!
The vaunting of this victory is done.
We are alone at last.

Michal. Yes.

David. That is all? . . .

For Israel I've wrought to-day—and for
You . . . who were round about me as a mist
Of armèd mighty angels triumphing.

Michal. Yes: It was well.

David. To you no more? to you
Whom not a slave can serve unhonored?

Michal (*struggling*). Nothing.

David. Empty of glow then seems it, impotent,
A shriveled hallowing . . .
Ashes of ecstasy that burned in vain.

Michal. No, no! I——

David. Michal?

Michal. No, divine it was!
And had I cried my praise the ground had broke
To Eden under me with blossoming.
Where was so wonderful a deed as this,
So fair a springing of salvation up?
Glory above the heavens could I seize,
Wreathing of dawn and loveliness unfading,
To crown you with and crown!

David. O lips!

Michal. With but
A sling, a shepherd's sling, you sped the brook,
Drew from its bed a stone, and up the hill
Where the great Philistine contemning cried,
Mounted and flung it deep upon his brain!

David. This is the victory and not his death!
Tell, tell thy joy with kisses on my lips!
Thy mouth! thy arms! thy breast!

Michal. No, no!

David. Thy soul!

[*Clasps her.*

Too much of waiting and of severance,
Of dread and distance and the deep of doubt!
Now must I fold you, falter all my love
And triumph on your senses till they burn
Beautiful as eternity with bliss.

Michal. Loose, loose me!

David. Nay, again! immortal kisses!

Michal. A frenzy, 'tis a frenzy! Let me free!—
This irremediable victory

Over Goliath severs us the more.

[*The tumult, again, afar.*

Hear how the people lift you limitless!
Almost to-day and in my father's stead
They would that you were king.

David. But ere to-morrow
Dim shall I be, and ere the harvest bend
Less than a gleam in their forgotten peril!

Michal. O were it, were it! But all silently
Jehovah fast is beckoning the realm
Into thy hands.

David. Then vainly we resist
The gliding on of firm divinity.
And yet whatever may be shall be done.

Michal. All, all?

David. That for thee reverently may

Michal. The anointing then shall be forgot?

David. Michal!

Michal. It may be told my father? and I may
Say to him all the secret?

David. And provoke
Murder in him, insatiable though
I fled upon the wilderness and famine?

Michal. He would not!

David. Nay.

Michal. I'll plead with him.

David. In vain.

Michal (*coldly*). Then . . . it is as I thought.

David. You are distraught.

Michal. This stroke to-day (*pointing to Goliath's head*) no love of me had in it.

David. A love, a passion fervid through me as
The tread and tremble of seraphic song
Along the infinite.

Michal. You use me!

David. Use?

Michal. A step to rise and riot in ambition!

David. So bitter are you, still, even in all?

Michal. You snared me to you!

David. Michal!

Michal. Cunningly
With Samuel netted fears about my father,
Till I am paltrily unto you pledged.

David. Enough.

Michal. Too much.

David. No more: the pledge I fling
Out of my heart, as 'twere enchantment dead,
And free you; but no more.

[*He moves from her.*

Michal. As if it were
Enchantment dead . . . Ah then 'tis true—there is
Another—is another!

David. Now, what fever?
A gentleness clad once your every grace.

Michal. There is some other that you lure and love.

David. It is not Michal speaking; so I wait.

Michal. Then you will learn . . .

[JUDITH *glides in.*

Who's that? (*to her*). Why are you here?

Judith (*to* DAVID, *with a laugh, as if with amorous joy*). Brave, it was brave, my love! beauteous! brave!

[*Goes to him.*

David. Woman?

Judith. The Philistine, a brazen tower,
A bastion of strength, fell to the earth!

David. Woman, who are you? . . . Take away your flesh!

[*She has clasped him.*

Take it away, the heat and myrrh of it.

Judith. So cold are you? It is no longer fair?
(*Wantonly.*) Oh! Ah! I understand! the princess! Oh!

[*Goes laughing and shaking her timbrel wickedly.*

Michal. A dancer, then, a very timbrel-player!

David. Until this hour I never looked upon her.
It is chicanery of chance or craft.
You who are noble, though in doubt adrift,
Be noble now!

Michal. And loving? Oh, I will—
Now that I know what should be done. Be sure!

David. Michal!

Michal. Now that I know what should be done!

[*Sweeps out. He understands and sinks to a seat.*

AHINOAM *enters.*

Ahinoam. David, the king. . . . (*Gently*) But what is this?

David. O queen .
It is but life.

Ahinoam. Nay.

David. Life that ever strings
Our hearts, so pitifully prone for it,
To ecstasy—then snaps.

Ahinoam. I love thee, David.

David. Then gracious be, and question here no more,
Where words are futile for an utterance.
But tell on of the king.

Ahinoam. He's driven, still;
And hither comes again, and must be calmed.
Your harp take you, and winds of beauty bring,
And consolation, as of valley eves
When there is ebb of sorrow and of toil.
Oh, could you heal him and forever heal!

David. Then would I be——!

[*Breaks off with great desire. Takes the harp and seats himself.*

Ahinoam. At once, for he will come.

[*A strain of wild sadness brings* SAUL, *and many, within. He pauses, his hand to his brow, enspelled of the playing: then slowly goes up the daïs.*

Ahinoam. My lord, shall David sing—to ease us?

Saul. Let him.

David (*with high sorrow*).

O heart of woe,
Heart of unrest and broken as a reed!

[*Plays.*

O heart whose flow
Is anguish and all bitterness of need!

[*Plays.*

O heart as a roe,
Heart as a hind upon the mountain fleeing
The arrow-wounds of being,
Be still, O heart, and rest and do not bleed!

[*Plays longer with bowed head.*

O days of life,
Days that are driven swift and wild from the womb!

[*Plays.*

O days so rife—
Days that are torn of trouble, trod of doom!

[*Plays.* MICHAL *enters.*

O days of strife—
Days of desire on deserts spread unending,
The burning blue o'erbending,
O days, our peace, our victory is the tomb!

[*He plays to a close that dies in anguished silence.*

Saul (*rising in tears*). David!

David. My lord?

Saul. Thy song is beauteous!

Stilling to sorrow! . . . Oh, my friend, my son!

David. To me is this? I do not dream? The king

Again is kind, and soft his spirit moves?

Saul. To you!

David. How shelter o'er me then will spring,

And safety, covering!

Saul. It ever shall.

Loveliest have you been among my days,

And singing weary madness from my brain.

[MICHAL *starts forward.*

How I have wronged thee!

Michal. Wronged him? (*in fury*).

David. Michal!

Saul. Girl?

Michal. You have not wronged him!

David. Michal!

Michal. No! but he
Is jeopardy and fate about you! drive
Him from you utterly and now away!

[*Murmurs of astonishment.*

Saul. What mean you?

Ishui. Speak.

Saul. What mean you?

Michal. This!

David. No word!

Michal. I'll not be kept!

David. But shall be; for to tell
Would rend silence forever from you—pale
Your flesh with haunting of it evermore!
All, all your being would become a hiss,
A memory of syllables that sear,
A living iteration of remorse.
I—I myself will save your lips the words
Of this betrayal leaping from your heart.

[*Goes nobly to* SAUL.

You seek, my lord . . . you seek whom Samuel
Anointed.

Saul. Yes.

David. Then know that it is I.

[*Consternation.*

Saul. You!

David. Guiltless I, no other! . . .

[Saul *seizes a javelin.*

I, though I sought it not and suffer, though—
I would it had not come and fast am sworn
Never against you to lift up——

Merab. Hear, hear!

Now he will cozen!

Doeg. He, "thy servant!"

Ishui. Hear!

[*Goliath's head is upset.*

A Voice. A thousand Saul hath slain! but David ten!

Saul (*choking*). Omnipotence shall not withhold me more.

[*Lifts javelin.*

Die, die!

Jonathan. No, father . . . hold!

Michal (*as* SAUL *flings*). What have I done?

[*Reels.*

Jonathan. David, unhurt? Awav, the wilderness!

Saul (*with another javelin*). He shall not, no!

David. Then king of Israel —!

[*Rushes up the throne, aflame.*

Murderous king, afoam with murder-heat,
Strike me to darkness and the waiting worm! —
But after be your every breathing blood!
Remorse and riving bitterness and fear!
Be guilt and all the hideous choke of horror!

[SAUL *trembling cowers, the javelin falling from him.* DAVID *breaks, then, through the throng and escapes by the door.* MICHAL *sinks to her knees, her face buried in her hands.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE: *A savage mountain cliff in the wilderness of Engeddi. On either side gray crags rise rugged, sinking away precipitously across the back. Cut into each is a cave. The height is reached by clefts from all sides. Between the crags to the East is the far blue of the Dead Sea; and still beyond, bathed in the waning afternoon, stretch the purple shores of Moab. During the act the scene grows crimson with sunset and a thundercloud arises over the sea. Lying on a pallet of skins near the cliff's verge,* DAVID *tosses feverishly. Three of his followers and a lad, who serves him, are gathered toward the front, ragged, hungry, and hunted, in altercation over a barley cake.*

David. Water! the fever fills me, and I thirst. Water!

First Fol. Listen.

Second Fol. He calls.

David. Water! I thirst.

The Lad. Yes, yes, my lord. (*Takes up a water skin.*) Ah, empty, not a quaff!

They've drunk it all from him! My lord, none's left.

I'll run and in the valley brim it soon.

[*He goes.* DAVID *sinks back.*

Second Fol. (*to* FIRST). *You* drank it, then.

First Fol. And should I thirst, not he?

Give me the bread.

Second Fol. If it would strangle you.

First Fol. I'll have it.

Second Fol. Or betray him? spitingly?

It is the last. Already you have eat.

And we are here within a wilderness.

First Fol. Be it, but I'll not starve.

Third Fol. He utters right.

Why should we but to follow a mere shepherd

Famish—over a hundred desert hills?

The prophecy portending him the throne—
Is folly, not fate! though it is Samuel's.
I'll trust in it no more.

First Fol. Nor I.

Third Fol. And Saul
Has driven us from waste to waste—pressed us
Even unto the Philistines for shelter,
And now unto this crag. And does not David
Brood but of Michal, not of smiting him
And, with a host, of leaping to the kingdom?

[DAVID *stirs to rise.*

First Fol. He moves; peace!

Third Fol. Let him.

Second Fol. Peace.

Third Fol. And fawning too?

David (*sufferingly*). Men—men, we must have news. Perpetual,
Implacable they stare unto each other,
This rock and stony sky. . . . We must have news.

[*Rises and comes down to them. They are silent.*

Longer is death. 'Tis over many days
Of sighing—and remembered verdancy;
Remembered here, where dew comes never up.
Who will go now and bring us word of Saul?

Third Fol. Have not Abishai, Abiathar,
And others gone?

David. Bravely.

Third Fol. And none returned!

David. Not one of all.

Third Fol. Well, then, we are not swine;
And life's but once. . . . So we will follow you
No longer hungered and rewarded never,
But perilously ever.

David. It is well.

[*He looses a bracelet from his arm.*

This was a gift from Saul. In it is ease.

[*Gives it* THIRD FOLLOWER, *who goes.*

This ring was Jonathan's. The jewel tells
Still of the sunny haven of his heart.

Upon my hand he pressed it—the day we leapt
Deeper than friends into each other's love.
[*Gives it to* First, *who goes.*
This chain——
Second Fol. I want it not.
David. You have not thought;
'Tis riches—such as Sidon marts and Tyre
Would covet.
Second Fol. I care not.
David. None else is left.
Second Fol. No matter. I but want . . . There
was of Gibeah
A woman—dear to me. Her face at night . . .
Weeping among my dreams. . . .
The prophecy
Is unfulfilled and vain!
David. And you would go?
Second Fol. The suffering—this cliff.
David. I understand.
(*Motions.*) So, without any blame, go—to content.
[*The* Second, *faltering, goes.*

(*Quietly.*) A desolation left, of rock and air,
Of barren sea and bitterness as vast.
Thou hast bereft me, Saul! . . . and Michal, thou!

[*He moves up cliff, gazes off, then kneels as to pray.*

My flesh cries for oblivion—to sink
Unwaking away into the night . . . where is
No tears, but only tides of sleep. . . .
No, crieth
Not for oblivion and night, but for
Rage and revenge! Saul! Saul! . . . My spirit, peace.
I must revenge's call within me quell
Though righteously it quivers and aflame.
As pants the hart for the water-brook, so I!

[*He bows his head. . . .* MICHAL *enters in rags with the lad. She sees* DAVID *rise and wander into cave, right.*

Michal. This is the place, then, this?
Lad. Yes, princess.

Michal. Here
So long in want and sickness he hath hid?
Under the livid day and lonelier night?
Lad. I brought him water, often.
Michal. Little lad!
But he has heard no word from me?—not how
My father, Saul, frantic of my repentance,
Had unto Phalti, a new lord, betrothed me?
How then I fled to win unto these wilds?
Lad. He heard not anything—only the tales
I told of Moab, my own land. . . . But, oh!

[David *plays within.*

It is his harp.
Michal. And strains that weep o'er me! . . .
I'll speak to him . . . and yet must be unknown!
A leper? as a leper could I . . .?
Lad. Why
Must he not know you?
Michal. Ask me not, lad, now;
But go a little.

Lad. Yes.

[*He sets down the water skin and goes.*

Michal (*delaying, then in a loud voice*). Unclean! Unclean!

[*Conceals her face in her hair.*

David. Who crieth here?

Michal. Unclean!

David (*appearing*). Who cries unclean?
Poor leper in these wilds, who art thou?

Michal. One
Outcast and faint, forlorn!

David. Then you have come
To one more bitter outcast than yourself—
One who has less than this lone void to give,
This sterile solitude and sun, this scene
Of leaden desolation that makes mad;
Who has no ease but cave or shading rock,
Or the still moon, or stars that glide the night.
One over whom——

Michal. Yet, pity!

David (*slowly*). The pale hours

Flow dead into eternity.

Michal. Ah, yet . . .!

David. My cloak, then, for thy tattered limbs.
Or, no—
This chain of Ophir for thy every need.
Once it was dear, but should be so no more.
(*Flinging it to her.*) Have it, and with it vanish memory
Out of my breast——

Michal. No, no.

David. And from me fall
Link upon link her loveliness that bound.

Michal. Oh, do not!

David (*starting*) Woman . . .?

Michal. Nothing. A chain like this
I once beheld wind undulantly bright
O'er Michal the king's daughter.

David. Woman, the king's?

Michal. Pity!

David. Who are you?

Michal. Stay! Unclean!

David. A spy?
A spy of Saul and hypocrite have crept
Hither to learn . . .?

Michal. Have heed—unclean!

David. How, then
Wandering came you here?

Michal. Unclean! Unclean!

David. My brain is overfull of fever, mad.
Almost and I had touched thy peril, held
Thy hideous contagion.

Michal. Nay!

David. Then who
Art thou to know and speak of her, of Michal?

Michal. One who has served the king.

David. And you have seen
Michal, you have beheld her?

Michal. Once, when she
In face was fairer and in heart than now
They say she is.

David. And heard her speak?

Michal. A night
Under the leaves of Gibeah—when she
Sang with another—David.

David. Say no more.

Michal. And from afar, under the moon, blew faint
The treading of the wine-presses with song.
David she loved, but anger-torn betrayed,
Unworthy of him.

David. Speak of her no more,
Nor of her cruelty, unless to pray
He she has ruined may forget her.

Michal. Yet
If deep she should repent?—if deep she should?

[*A cry interrupts. They start.*

David. A jackal? (*Listens.*) No, the signal! Word at last!
(*To* MICHAL.) He who is near may prove to thee less kind.

[*She goes. He leaps up the cliff.*

Abishai? Abiathar? . . . It is!
But staggering and wounded? breathless? torn?
The priest with bloody ephod, too, and wild?

[*Watching, then springing to meet them as they reel in.*

Abishai, what is it that you bring?
Abiathar, up! answer!

Abiathar. Water!

David. Up!

[*He brings the water skin. They drain it fiercely.*

What is it now so fevered from you stares,
And breathing, too, abhorrence? Gasp it out.

Abiathar. I stifle—in a universe—he still—
Has breath in.

David. Saul?

Abiathar. Ill scathe him! Scorpions
Of terror and remorse sting in his soul!

David. If you have tidings, tell in words less wild.

Abiathar. Then ask, and hate shall calm me.

David. Ask?

Abiathar. On, on!
Seek if he lives!

David. Who?

Abiathar. Seek if prophecy
Founts yet in Judah!

David. Samuel . . .?

Abiathar. Is dead!
Dead—and of tidings more calamitous.

[*A pause.*

David (*hoarsely*). Tell on. I hear.

Abiathar. Saul gloating to believe
The priests who gathered sacredly at Nob,
Plotted assisting you, hath had them——

David. No . . .!

Abiathar. Slain at the hands of Doeg—murdered, all!

David. But he—your father?

Abiathar. Was among them; fell.

[*He stands motionless.*

David (*gently*). Abiathar, my friend! . . . Appeaseless Saul!

Abiathar. Hear all, hear all! Thy father, too, and mother,

Even thy kindred, out of Israel
Are driven into Moab; and this king,
Delirious still for blood as desert pards,
With Merab, whelp of him, and many armed,
Is near us now—a-quiver at Engeddi
For your destruction:

[David *struggles for control.*

And yet you will not strike.

David (*low*). No, but of Michal, tell me good at once,

Lest unendurable this lot, I *may*——
Mounting o'er every oath into revenge.

Abiathar. Ha—Michal!

David. She withholds her father's wrath?

Abiathar. She's well.

David. Not if you say no more.

Abiathar. I know
Nothing of her.
David. Your look belies.
Abiathar. Perhaps:
As did her love.
David. That is for me.
Abiathar. Well, what?
A woman who betrays?
David. Speak, not evade;
And judge her when earth has no mystery.
Abiathar. Then from your craving put her—for—she is
Unworthy any tremor of your veins.
David. Dawn-lilies under dew are then unworthy,
And nesting doves are horrible to heaven.
I will not so believe. Your reason?
Abiathar. Saul
Has given her—and she will wed him, aye—
To Phalti, a new lord.
David. Untrue of her!

Abiathar. Cry. Yet you will believe it.

David. Not until
The parable of verdant Spring is hushed
Ever of bloom, to prove it. Never till
Hermon is swung into the sea! until
The last void of the everlasting sky——

[*Looking up, he falters, breaks off, and is strangely moved.*

Abiathar. Now what alarm?

Abishai. What stare you on?

Abiathar. He's mad?

[*Then, suddenly seeing.*

No, no! . . . an eaglet! . . . Pierct! . . .

David (*watching*). And falling here. . . .
And beating against death unbuoyantly.

[*The bird drops at their feet.*

A destiny, a fate in this is hidden!

[*Bends to it.*

Abiathar. And—why?

David (*starts back*). The arrow is his! his, and
no other's!
Quick, no delay. Efface all trace of us.

[*Takes water skin.*

Abiathar. But how? be clear.
David. We are discovered—in!
On us is death. Open the secret chamber
Amid the cave, for from the bow of Saul
Is yonder bleeding—from no other.
Abiathar. Saul's?
So soon! was any here?
David. To-day, to-day.
A leper wandering.
Abiathar. We are betrayed.

[Abishai *hastes to cave, right,* David *and* Abiathar *listen. Noise of approach is heard.*

David. They near.
Abiathar. And many.

David. King of Israel!
Inexorable!

Abiathar. O, rebuke him, do!

David. Almost I am beyond this tolerance.

Abiathar. In truth. Therefore it is you rise and shake
Out of his power the scepter!

David. Tempt me not!
Mercy and memory almost are dead,
And craving birth in me is fateful ire.

[*But a shout rings out as they flee, into the cave: yet hardly have done so when* SAUL *and his men pour in.*

Saul. On, to him! search the caves! in, in, and bring
Him to my sword and Michal with him.
(*Pacing.*) They
Shall couch upon eternity and dust.

(*Weakly.*) I am the king and Israel is mine. . . .
I'll sleep upon their grave, I'll sleep upon it,
And hear the worm. . . .!

[*To a soldier reëntering from one cave.*

Where is he? Bring him.

Soldier. O king—

Saul. You've slain him and you tremble! Say it.

Soldier. No.

Saul. Then hither with him; hither!

Soldier. He's not here.

Saul. A treachery! You cunningly contrive
To aid him, so. . . .

[*To a soldier from the other cave.*

Bring me his head.

Soldier (*fearfully*). My lord,
He is not there. . . .

Saul. I tell you it is lies—
Because you deem that he shall be the king,

And treasure up reward and amnesty.

[*Rushes wildly to caves in turn, then out among them.*

From me ill-fruited, ineffectual herd!
Away from me, he's fled and none of you
Is servant and will find and for me seize him!

[*They scatter.*

From me—I'll sleep—I'll rest—and then—

[*As they go.*

I'll sleep.

[ABNER *and* DOEG *remain.* SAUL *enters cave, left.*

Abner (*to* DOEG, *significantly*). The Evil Spirit, and none is here to heal him.

Doeg. It came as never before—as drunkenness.

Abner. Then—safe to leave him?

Doeg. Will he brook denial?

Abner. And Merab, too, will soon be here.

Doeg. Well, come.

Abner. I'll go and look upon him.

[*Goes.*

(*Returning.*) Already he sleeps.

So we may seek us water; (*then suddenly*) no,
abide!

[*Is held by* MICHAL *entering.*

Woman, who are you, who?

Michal (*quaking*). Unclean! away!

Doeg. Unclean? a leper? in this place? Are
there

No stones to stone you? Hence! And had I not
A brother such as thou——

Michal. Pity! Unclean!

[*She quickly goes, then they. A space;
then she returns, trembling and fearful.*

I'll call him! I will save him! David! David!—
I his discomfiture and ruin!—David!

[*Searches.*

Hear, David! hear me! David!

[*Sees* SAUL.

The king! My father!

I cannot—am not—whither shall I, whither . . .?

[*Flees, as a scuffling is heard and* DAVID'S *voice.*

David. Loose me, I say. 'Twas Michal, and she called!

[*Appears, withheld by* ABIATHAR.

(*Breaking free.*) I say that it was she!

Abiathar. Foolhardy, no;
Return into the cave, and ere too late!

[MERAB, *veiled, enters behind them.*

David. 'Twas Michal and no other.

Abiathar. You are duped.

David (*searching*). The breathing of archangels could not so
Have swung the burden from me as her . . . Ha!

[*Sees* MERAB; *slowly recoils.*

Merab. It is not Michal.

David. No—it is not Michal.

[*Motions the priest aside.*

Merab. Yet it is one who——

David. Need not lift her veil,
Or longer stay. The path she came is open.

Merab. I'm here—and here will speak. I've hither stolen,
Yearning—I say it—yearning—and I will.

David. These words I do not know.

Merab. Because you will not.
More all-devouring than a Moloch is
This love within me——

David. Love and you are twain,
As sun and Sheol.

Merab. False. I am become
For want of you as famine-wind, a wave
In the mid-tempest, with no rest, no shore.

David. I do not hear the unashamèd words
Of one who has but recently another,
Adriel, wedded.

Merab. You refuse me, then?

David. I beg you but to cease.

Merab. Goaded, chagrined?
No, but this will I do. The Philistines,
For long at rioting within their walls,
Gather again and break toward Gilboa. . . .

David. Merab of Saul!

Merab. To-morrow must my father
Return from hunting you and arm for battle.
But—many would that you were king.

David. Were . . .?

Merab. King!

David. I do not understand your eyes.

Merab. I will
For love of you arouse rebellion up,
Murmur about the host your heaven-call,
And lift you to the kingdom.

David. To the——Stay!
Your words again.

Merab. The kingdom.

David. Awful God!

Merab. What is your mien? you will not?

David. Twice the words—
Full from her lips—and to betray her father.

[ABIATHAR *discovers* SAUL.

Merab. You will not? answer!

David. Odious utterly!
As yonder sea of death and bitter salt!
As foam-girt Joppa of idolatry,
As Memphian fane of all abhorrencies!

[*A pause.*

Morning would move with horror of it, noon
A livid sepulcher of shame span o'er,
And night shrink to remember day had been!

Merab. You scorn—you scorn me?

David. Jonathan! your sister!

Merab. Then Saul shall rend you dead. And Jonathan! . . .

[*She laughs shrilly.*

Perchance you had not heard that Jonathan
Knows to the Philistines you fled—and loathes you!

David. I have not heard.

Merab. Nor have not, ah? how Michal
Is given to the embraces of another?

[DAVID *shrinks.*

You desperately breathe and pale at last?

[*She laughs more bitterly.*

To me for aid, to me you yet shall come.

[*She goes.* DAVID *lifts his hand to his brow in pain. Then* ABIATHAR *abruptly descends from* SAUL'S *cave to him.*

Abiathar. David——

David. Leave me.

Abiathar. Not till you know—and strike!

David. I tell you, go.

Abiathar. I tell you 'tis the king.

David. Who breaks forbearance—yes.

Abiathar. Who lieth yonder,
And sleeping lieth—for a thrust to end.

David (*his sword quickly out—struggling*).
Then shall there be an ending—of these wounds
That wring me—of this wail

Under the deeps of me against his wrongs.
Saul, Saul! . . . Michal! . . . Oh, never-ceasing ill!

[*Flings down the sword in anguish.*

Abiathar. You will not come?

David. The sun—is set.

Abiathar. Has Saul
Hunted you to this desert's verge?

David. Enough!

Abiathar. Has he pursued you, all his hate unleashed?
Are Samuel—the priests, not slain? my father?
The kingdom is not in decay, and falls?
You are not prophecy's anointed one?
Seize up the sword and strike—or I myself!

David. Or—you yourself? . . .

[*Puts them aside, takes sword, and goes to* Saul's *cave.*

Abishai. What will he do? . . . listen

Michal *enters unseen.*

Abiathar. If Saul cries out——

Abishai. Be ready.

Michal (*to them*). What is this?

[DAVID *reënters—haggard and wild; a piece of* SAUL'S *cloak and the sword still in his hand. . . .*

Michal (*when she sees him, with a cry*). Ah, you have slain—have slain him? wretch of God?
And sleeping as he was? slain him in sleep?
And merciless? (*as rage takes* DAVID) and now will slay me too?

David (*who has seized her hand yet speaks as to the skies*). She is the leper then, in faithless rags.
Who drove me a prey upon this wilderness!
Upon the blot of it and death and sear!
The silence and relentless burning swoon!
She is the leper, who has broken troth
And shut the cry of justice from her breast!
Who's stifled with me desolation's woe,
Who's followed still and still has me betrayed!

Michal. Betrayed? No, loose me!

David. Slain thy father? slain?

[*Flinging the piece of* SAUL'S *cloak at her feet.*

See how I might—see, see you, yonder he lies,
A king who quits the kingdom, though a cloud
Of Philistines is foaming toward Gilboa;
Jeoparded leaves it, undefended, for
Pursuit of me and pitiless harrying!
A king who murders priests. . . .

Michal. Priests?

David. Stifles God
With penitence that He has shaped the world!
Have slain? have slain him! I have slain him!
Ah!
Ah, that I had thy falseness and could slay him!

Michal. David . . .!

David. Nevermore near me! never with
Thy quivering—thy tenderness—thy lure—
Thy eyes that hold infinity of fate—
Thy breathing cassia-sweet, but sorcery!

Michal. Oh . . .

David. Never thy presence pouring beauty, swift,
And seething in the brain as frantic wine!
I'll be no more enspelled of thee—never!
I will not hear thee and be wound by words
Into thy wile as wide as Ashtoreth's;
Rather, O God . . . eternity of pain!

[*He goes in agony—the priest and* ABISHAI *after.* MICHAL *stands gazing tearless before her as* SAUL, *awakened, comes slowly from the mouth of the cave down toward her.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

SCENE: *The house of* MIRIAM, *the "Witch of Endor," by Mount Gilboa—where* SAUL *is encamped against the Philistines. It is of one story, built rectangularly about an inner court, which is dimly lighted. Under the gallery which ranges around the court are doors leading to the sleeping and other apartments; before one of these, a lattice. On the left is the gate opening to the street. At the back to one side, the teraphim, or image of divination; on the other side a stairway mounts to the roof. Above is the night and vague lightning amid a moan of wind. During the Act comes dawn. Forward on a divan sits* MIRIAM *alone, in blind restlessness.*

Miriam. Adah! . . . The child is sunken in a sleep.

Yet would I have her near me in this night,
And hear again the boding of her tale.
Unto the blind the vision and the awe
Of the invisible sway ever in,
The shadow of nativities that lead
Upon fatality.
Girl! Adah! Girl!

[*The wind passes.* ADAH *enters from a chamber, rubbing her eyes.*

Thou art awake?
Adah. I slumbered.
Miriam. Stand you where
Fathoming I may feel within you. Now,
Again: you've hither fled your mistress Merab,
In fear of her?
Adah. Yes.
Miriam. At Engeddi Michal
By Saul was apprehended? Merab now
Plotteth against her—she and Doeg?

Adah. Still.

Miriam. And 'twas in Merab's tent you heard, the king
Despairing of to-morrow's battle, comes
Hither to-night to bid me lift the spirit
Of Samuel out of the dead and learn
The issue?

Adah. Doeg said it.

Miriam. And—you hear?—
Many within the army urge for David,
Would cry him king, if Saul were slain?

Adah. O many.

[*A knock at the gate. They start up fearful.*

Miriam. Who seeks blind Miriam of Endor's roof,
Under the night and unextinguished storm?
Come you a friend?

David (*without*). A friend.

Miriam. As knows my soul!

[*Throws open the gate.* DAVID *enters and* ABIATHAR *cloaked.*

Thy voice again!—this blindness of my eyes—
If it be David, speak.

David. Yes, Miriam.

Miriam. David of Jesse, Israel's desire!
Let me behold thee (*her hands go over him*) with my fingers' sight,
And gather in them touch of thee again!
Thy voice is as dream-dulcimers that stir
The silent deeps of memory and joy.
But, aie! why are you here? You have been *there?*

David. Yes—in the camp of Saul.

Miriam. In spite of Death!
Do you not know——

David. I know—that Saul would rather
O'er-trample me than a multitude of foes.
That it is told him I who shun his ire—
Though death were easier, if dutiful—

Am come up with the Philistines to win
The kingdom. That he would slay me though I
fought
For Israel!—But, Michal!—

Miriam. Aie——

David. What brews?
She was not in the camp.

Miriam. Men all are mad!
And you who should be never.

David. She is in
Some peril.

Miriam. You, in more! And must from here
Swiftly away, for Saul is——

David. I must see her.

Miriam. Unholy!

David. Yet unholier were flight.

Miriam. You are the anointed!

[*A heavy knock at the gate.*

Ah, calamity!
You would not heed—'tis Saul!

David. Here?

Miriam. He is come
That I shall call up Samuel.

David. You, you—?
The awful dead?

Saul (*calls*). Woman of Endor!

Miriam. Hide!
The lattice yonder!

Saul. Woman of Endor! Woman!

[DAVID *and* ABIATHAR *withdraw. The knocking hastier.*

Woman of Endor! Woman of Endor! Woman!

Miriam. Who crieth at my gate?

Saul. Unbar and learn-

Miriam. To danger?

Saul. None!

Miriam. To thieves?

Saul. To rueing if
You tarry!

[*She lets him in, with* ISHUI *and* ADRIEL.

Miriam. Whom seek you?

Saul. Witch of Endor, you,
Who of the fate-revealing dead divine.
Out of the Pit you call them!

Miriam. What is this?

Saul. I say that you can raise them!

Miriam. You are come
With snaring! knowing well that Saul the king
Is woe and bitterness to all who move
With incantation.

Saul. He is not.

Miriam. Depart!

Saul. I must have up out of the Awfulness
Him I would question.

Miriam. Perilous!

Saul. Prepare
Before thy teraphim. No harm, I swear,
Shall come of it. Bid Samuel appear.
The battle! its event!

Miriam (*with a cry*). I know thee now!
Saul! thou art Saul! the Terror!

Saul. Call him up.

Ready is it, the battle—but I am
Forsaken of all prophecy and dream,
Of voices and of priest and oracle,
To augur it.

Miriam. A doom's in this!

Saul. He must
Hold comfort, and the torrent of despair
Within me stay and hush.

Miriam (*slowly*). Then must it be.

[*Has sunk by the teraphim, and incants amid wind and lightning.*

Prophet of Israel, who art beyond
The troubling and the terrifying grave,
Th' immeasurable moan and melancholy
Of ways that win to Sheol—Rise! Arise!

[*She waits . . . Only the wind gust. Then up, with wide-stretched arms, and with wild blind eyes.*

Prophet of Israel, arise! Not in
The name of Baal, Amon, Ashtoreth,

Dagon or all the deities that dream
In trembling temples of Idolatry,
But of Jehovah! of Jehovah! rise!

[*An elemental cry is heard out of the earth. Then wavering forms rise, vast, in continuous stream.* MIRIAM, *with a curdling shriek, sinks moaning to her knees.*

Saul. Woman, I cannot—dare not—look upon it.
Utter thy sight.

[*The Spirit of* SAMUEL *begins to take shape through the phantoms.*

Miriam. I see . . . ascending
Forms as of gods in swaying ghostliness,
Dim apparitions of a dismal might,
And now is one within a mantle clad,
Who looketh——

Saul. Samuel!

Miriam. Who looketh with
Omniscience in his mien, and there is chill

About him and the cling of eternity!

His eyes impale me!

Saul. Spirit, give me word!

[*He falls heavily to the ground.*

Samuel (*as afar*). O evil king! and wretched king! why hast

Thou brought me from the quietness and rest?

Saul. The battle on the morrow——

Samuel. Evil thou art

For underneath this night thou hast conspired

Death to thy daughter Michal—if at dawn

The battle shall be lost—lest she may fall

Into the hands of David.

David (*in horror*). O!

Ishui. Whose cry?

Samuel. I tell thee, Saul, thy scepter shrivels fast.

The battle shall be lost—it shall be lost.

[*The Spirit of* SAMUEL *disappears. A wail of wind.*

Adriel. Ishui, true? Is Michal to be slain?

Ishui. This is no hour for fools and questioning.

Saul (*struggling up*). The battle, Ishui, at once command
It shall begin! To Jonathan and say it.

[ISHUI *goes.*

No prophecy shall sink me and no shade.
I am the king, and Israel, my own.

[*Frenzied he goes. A silence.*

David (*breaking forth*). Michal to die and Israel to fall!
Prophet of prophets, Samuel, return!
Out of the Shadow and the Sleep, return,
Compassionate, and tell me where she is,
That I may save. Again appear and say
That Israel to-morrow may not fall—
Not fall on ruin!

Adriel. David? is it thou?

David. Meholah's Adriel, your conscience asks.

Adriel. You were concealed?

David. And I have heard. Cry then
Out unto Saul! Betray me, cry you out!

Adriel. Betray?

David. Is the word honey? Is it balm?

Adriel. David, I've wronged you—

David. Haply!

Adriel. Jealously.
And ask now no forgiveness—not until
Michal is won from peril!

David. Do you know
More of her? still?

Adriel. I only know that Saul—
[*Fearful.*
Has given Doeg power—
And that somewhere in Endor he conceals her.

David. God!

Adriel. Ay, and that himself's not far away.

David. Ahaste, and bring him then by force or guile,

In any way, that we may from him win
Where she is prisoned.

[ADRIEL *goes.*

The quivering
Quicksands of destiny beneath her stir.
Is heaven a mocking shield that ever keeps
God from our prayers?

Miriam. David, contain thy heart.

[*A faint uproar begins afar; and dawn.*

David. The battle! on the wind. Abiathar,
Speed out upon the mountain-side and cull
All that befalls.

[ADAH *opens the gate. The priest goes.*

Adah (*springing back*). Oh!

David. Child, why do you quail?

Adah. My mistress, Merab!

David. Girl?

Adah. I saw her—she—
Is coming hither! Do not let her—she—
I fear—I fear her!

David. Hither coming?

Adah. She!

[*The gate is thrown open fiercely.*

Merab (*entering*). Woman, and witch, did Adriel, my husband,
Come to you with the king?

[*Sees* DAVID, *stops.*

David. Unnatural,
Unkind, most cruel sister!

Merab (*shrinks*). You are here?

David. Once me you would have poisoned, but the coil
Within your bosom I beheld. And now
Michal your sister is the victim.

Merab. I—
Know not your meaning.

David. The battle burning yonder,
If it adversely veers, the king has planned
Michal is not to live lest she may hap
Unto my arms.

Merab. That Michal shall be slain?

[*The tumult again.*

David. Almighty, smite, and save to Thee thy people!

And save Thy altars unto Israel!

[*He bows his head. A stir comes at the gate.*

Merab. David, 'tis Adriel!

Adriel. Ope! open, you!

David. At last the word.

Merab. Girl, Adah, draw the bar.

[*She does, with awe, as* DAVID *cloaks his face.* ADRIEL *enters, and* DOEG, *who pauses in quick alarm, as* DAVID *goes between him and the gate.*

Doeg. What place is this? Why do you bar that gate?

Merab, 'tis you? Why do you gaze, rigid?

And this is the blind witch, Miriam?

David. It is.

[*He throws off the cloak.*

Doeg. Lured? I am snared? a trap?

David. Where have you Michal?

Doeg (*drawing*). No closer!

David. If she is an atom harmed——!
Where is she?

Doeg. I was the servant of the king,
I but obey him.

David. And thy horrible heart.
Then speak, or unto frenzy I am driven.

Doeg. I'll drive you there with——

[*Breaks off with low laugh.*

David. Tell it!

Doeg. Unto your
Soft sympathy—and passion? (*Laughs.*) She is
dead.

David (*immovable, then repressed*).
If it is so, the lightning, that is wrath
Within the veins of God, should sink its fang
Into thy bosom and sear out thy heart.
If it is so, this momentary calm,
This silence pouring overfull the world,

Would rush and in thee cry until thy bones
Broken of guilt are crumbled in thy groans.
Dead, she is dead?

Miriam (*starting*). No, David, my lord, he lies!
[*Strangely, as in a trance.*
To wound you, lies!

David. Not dead?

Miriam. I see her eyes!
[*All listen amazed.*
I see her in a vision. She is near——
Is in a cave—is bound—and is alone.
I will go to her—quickly bring her.

Doeg. Not—
[*Lunges at her.*
If this shall reach you.

David. Ah! . . . and, near, it did!
[*Guards* MIRIAM *out.*
But now, O plotter, bloody, false, and foul,
Who as a pestilence of midnight marsh
Have oozed corruption into all around you,
Now shall the realm be free of you at last.

Within its arteries you've flowed, poison,
Incentive of irruption and unrest,
Of treachery and disaffection's sore,
Till even the stars that light it seemed as tares.
Sown hostile o'er the nightly vale of heaven.

[*Draws firmly. Coldly, skillfully approaches for attack.*

Doeg (*retreating*). No farther!

David. Unto the end! unto the end!

[*He rushes in; they engage;* DOEG *is wounded.*

Your villainy is done.

[*Quickly forces him under. The gate then opens and* ABIATHAR *hurries in.*

Abiathar. David, the battle——!

[*Sees* DOEG *and stops, pale.*

David. Fetter him.

Abiathar. Only fetter? (*His dagger out*) the murderer
Of priestly sanctity and of my father?

David. Abiathar! You know obedience?

[Doeg *is sullenly bound and led aside. Then a panic is heard afar, and dim laments.* David, *who has sunk to a seat, springs anxiously up.*

Listen! that cry!

A Voice. Woe! woe!

David. What is its wail?

The Voice. The battle's lost!

David. Abiathar—?

The Voice. Saul flees!

David. Abiathar, is lost?

Abiathar. I fear it.

David. Then, (*pointing to* Doeg)
Off with his armor for me. I will go
And backward bend defeat, backward bend it!
Duty to Saul is over.

Adriel. You must not.
A fruitless intrepidity it were.

Abiathar. Remember your anointing!

Abishai. And its need!

[*The gate opens.*

And Michal! remember Michal! for she lives!

[DAVID *turns.* MICHAL *enters with* MIRIAM.

Adriel. Hosanna!

Miriam. David! David——?

Michal (*pleading, to him*). It is I.

Miriam. The cords were cruel, hungrily sank in Her wrists and ankles.

Michal. David! look on me.

David. My words must be alone with her—alone.

Adriel. Come, all of you—the battle.

[*They go out the gate.*

Michal. My lord! . . . my lord!

[*He is silent.*

I ask not anything but to be heard—
Though once I would not hear. Has all of life
No glow for me?

David. Betrayers should have none.

Michal. I was a woman—the entanglement
Of duty amid love we have no skill
To loosen, but with passion.

David. You too late
Remember it is so.

Michal. Nobility
All unbelievable it seemed that you
Could innocently wait on time to tide
You to the kingdom. Then forgive, I plead.

David. But, in the wilderness, your perfidy!

Michal. Doubt of it welleth thro' your voice.
No, no,
To save you strove I——!

David. Michal!

Michal. Not to betray!
From Saul, my father, penitent I fled,
Seeking you in Engeddi's wild.

David. And Phalti?

Michal. 'Twas wedding him I loathed.

David. Say true!

Michal. This knife
Unfailingly into my breast had sunk
And spared me, had not flight.

David. This—this can be?
[*A great joy dawning in him.*
Beyond all hope it is, even as day's
Wide empery outspans our littleness.
A tithing of thy loveliness were beauty
Enough for earth. Yet it is mine, is mine?

Michal. David . . . . !

[*Is starting to his arms, but cries beat back their joy. Then the gate is flung open and* ADRIEL *enters, shaken. He looks from one to the other.*

David (*at last*). Adriel! Adriel!
What have you?

Adriel. Saul—is slain!

Michal. My father?

Adriel. Slain!
And Jonathan——

David. No!

Adriel. Fell beside him down. . . .

The fray was fast—Israel fled—the foe
Fierce after Saul, whom Jonathan defended.

Michal. My father!

David. And my brother Jonathan!

If I believe it will not miracle
Alone bring joy again unto my pain?

[*Then as wails arise.*

O Israel, the Infinite has touched
Thy glory and it changes to a shroud!
Thy splendor is as vintage overspilt,
For Saul upon the mountains low is lying,
And Jonathan beside him, beautiful
Beyond the mar of battle and of death.
Yea, kingly Jonathan! And I would give
The beating of my life into his veins.
Willing for it would I be drouth and die! . . .

[*As the wails rearise.*

Yea, peaks of curst Gilboa, I would die!
So let dew leave you, and as sackcloth let

Clouds cover you, and ashes be your soil,
Until I bring upon Philistia
And Gath and Askalon extinguishing,
And sorrow—and immensity of tears!

[*Relieved, and going to* MICHAL *who dazedly weeps.*

But we must calm the flowing of this grief,
For tho we cannot see now thro our pain,
How love, as sandal-breath and trickling balm,
Will heal us in the unbegotten years,
Too headlong must not be our agony.
Hush now thy wounded heart and dry thy tears,
For see, the East uplifts us wings of Dawn.

[*They climb the stair to the housetop. As they look away toward the battle's rout the clouds part, and over them breaks the full brightness of the sun. . . .*

THE END



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